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LITERATURE AND LIFE

Il jant toujouvs avoir soin
De ne pas danser dcvant le buffet

By a Charentou Lunatic

Μήδεν ῎αγαν

Greek equivalent of the same

LITERATURE AND LIFE

THINGS SEEN, HEARD AND READ

BY
E. B. OSBORN

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To

H. A. GWYNNE

EDITOR OF THE "MORNING POST'
IN WHICH, WITH HIS KINDLY
CONNIVANCE, SO MANY OF
THESE ESSAYS ORIGINALLY
APPEARED

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proletariat, an ever-smiling, crumpled-up little fellow who plays on a tooth-comb, keeps a penny in his pocket so as not to be arrested for lacking the means of self-support, and has been known to steal joints out of basement kitchens by means of an adroitly manoeuvred hook and line. The other day I offered him sixpence if he would make up a piece of poetry out of his head ; thrice he tapped it with the musical comb in token of his willingness to strike the bargain. A week later he asked for his sixpence, at the same time presenting me with an Insurance Act circular ! It was a little too Celtic, but well worth the money.

The French lunatic, on the other hand, often makes poetry his profession. M. Marcel Reja, the enterprising author of " L'Art chez les Fous," has made a most interesting and instructive anthology of his productions. Some of these specimens are taken from " Le Journal de Charenton," a periodical entirely written and edited—admirably edited—by insane persons. The most rudimentary form of lunatic's verse is that which is all assonance, each line giving a different interpretation of the same more or less musical aggregate of sounds. The following specimen is classed as prose—wrongly so, in my opinion—by the learned investigator :

Les dents, la bouche ;
Les dents la bouchent;
L'aidant la bouche ;
L'aide en la bouche ;
Laides en la bouche ;
Lait dans la bouche ;
L'est dam le a bouche ;
Les dents, la bouche.

The author's explanation of this unique poem is too long for quotation. The subtle modulations of the

primary line are exquisite to a degree, and it is to be hoped that some of the eager-eared poets of the Celtic twilight will feel their way to imitating it reverently—even if they have to retire into the " bee-loud " glade of the nearest asylum as a means to that end. Sung softly to a suitable melody over the dentist's chair the original French should prove as sleep-provoking as a whiff of laughing-gas—not that this is a laughing matter! A more elaborately evolved example of the verse-forms, in which sound takes sense captive, is following " Apologie de Napoleon " :

Onze minutes, criant, horizon.
Canons, lueurs, secondes, detonation.
Nous calculames qu'Apollon
Fasse cent dix lieues en phaeton ;
Dix-huit-cent, observa Colonel
Qu' Icare se perdit au soleil,
Done Louis ne mourut pas, Napoleon.
Craignit d'Espagne l'inquisition,
Le due d'Enghien ne devait pas suffire,
Pour tuer souftrir, il guillotine.

vigorously declaimed, with the help of sweeping gestures, this mass of melodramatic sound will always *(experto crede)* elicit some such epithet as " Magnificent! " from a listener whose knowledge of French is imperfect. Coming to the pieces in which sense—or, at any rate, sensuousness—gets a little of its own back, we find that the French lunatic invariably prefers the simpler metres. " Comme en outre la grande simplicity et la monotonie de ce rhythme rSalisent en quelque sorte la perfection dans l'automatisme," observes M. Reja, " il n'y a pas lieu de nous etonner que nos versificateurs adoptent presque tous Talexandrin a ensure mediane (selon la formule Boileau) ou le vers de huit pieds, plus familier a leurs oreilles

et plus simple." It often happens, however, that a sudden gush of emotion bursts the fetters of the simplest form; as in a poetical epistle, an almost imperceptible idyll, by a young girl, which begins

Qu'un jour avec mon Edouard je dansais en rond,

and ends

Sais-tu, non, savez-vous que c'est ma sceur aimee
Embrasses papa dis, ah ; laisses-moi . . . Chariot
Laisses tes vers tranquilles et dis ce que tu voudras,
Eh bien attends maintenant je finis doucement mon ecriture.

There is something infinitely pathetic in this interminable and incoherent letter. To me at any rate it is full of the sad earnestness of true poetry, offering as it does the spectacle of a maimed soul, a white, broken-winged Psyche, no longer able to fly but crawling wearily about a garden of silly still-fragrant remembrances. But laughter, not tears, is provoked by a " Poesie sur la Panama/' which was written by a patriotic lunatic about the time Caran d'Ache drew his famous history of the Panama cheque :

Notre belle France est dans la souffrance.
Les malheureux ont prete leur argent.
Le Panama les met dans la souffrance.
II ne manque pas, h6las, d'intrigants.
Aux malheureux ils ont pris leurs 6pargnes,
Ont pris leurs ors, se les ont partages.
Les ouvriers et les hommes des campagnes
Dites-moi, helas, qui va vous proteger.
Ils representaient notre republique.
C'etaient les representants du pays.
Voici leurs oeuvres democratiques,
Ils ont vole ca leur est pas permis.

It sometimes happens that the poet makes " Bicetre *execre* " the burden of his poem; to be mad and to know that one is mad is the ultimate tragedy of the Bedlam which, after centuries of imbecile cruelty, has once more become a Bethlehem. Such passages as

> Monsieur le Medecin, bien triste est un etat
> A la maison de fous, ou le repentir pleure ;
> Ou le jour est un siecle, et chaque instant une heure ;
> Ou l'existence n'est qu'un eternel combat.
>
> Cette inutile vie est celle de Lemaire,
> Dont le repentir vrai peut inspirer pi tie.

are common enough in the poetry of the French asylum, though it is not often that the vivid exactness and strict melodiousness of Verlaine are so surely recalled as in the foregoing example. Much more often the bronzen rhymes, the metallic rhythms, the clanging antitheses of Victor Hugo are suggested; it would seem, indeed, that he is the poets' poet for every prisoner of the modern *in pace* of a padded chamber. This excerpt from the poem of a lunatic who had never written verse before his sickness and never wrote a line afterwards is a good example of the " panache Hugolien " :

> II grandit . . . comme un ver, dans l'ombre !
> Et, serpent au soleil dete,
> II se glisse et se mele au nombre
> Des hydres dont la haine sombre
> Envenime chaque cit6.
> Ignoble heros de guingette,
> Faux mendiant de carrefours,
> Escroc portant un masque honnete,
> Hideux detrousseur qui vous guette,
> Cest **lui** partout! C'est lui toujours 1

Baudelaire is another favourite model, naturally. However, even in France the literary lunatic is refreshingly infrequent. One is more intrigued by the inventor of an epic in the form of imaginary letters exchanged by personages of importance, of which the message of Pope Pius VII. to Mohammed is an agreeable example:

> Tes immondes projets, pere du paganisme,
> Feront aucun progres chez nos chers abrutis ;
> Leon (XIII) mon successeur veut le christianisme ;
> C'est notre commerce, sans lui plus de rotis ;
> Plus de Macon, Bordeaux, plus de patisserie,
> De poulets, de jambons qu'attirent la Beaut6 ;
> Respecte, Mahomet, notre polygamic (secrete),
> Vivons en bons voisins durant rEternit6,
> Laissons nos partisans *(bis)* dans leur obscurite.

The love-poetry of the asylum is far too fleshly as a rule for quotation, but M. Reja presents us with a charming specimen in the mode of a modern Catullus, which is a fitting conclusion to this brief survey of a book that never ought to be forgotten :

> Geo, verse ton cceur dans mon cceur,
> J'en serai le meilleur vainqueur,
> Ton plus tendre amant, je le jure,
> Sur mon ame mon amour dure
> Autant qu'un eternel printemps.
> Celebrons nos joyeux vingt ans
> Au ciel brillant de la jeunesse,
> O ma tendre Cleo ! ma charmante maltresse !

Thus it will be seen that the poetry of the French asylum, even if it has not set the Seine on fire, is not to be sneered at; at any rate it proves that the French lunatic is a Frenchman to the last.

As for the lunatics of England, they have disappointed me sadly. "King Lear's Chaplet," even if all the material I have collected were used to weave it, could not be described as a "love of a lid" by the kindliest American critic. I have corresponded with a number of alienists (one of whom actually asked me to "come inside," so to speak), but the late Dr. Forbes Winslow was the only one who could help me to a few likely specimens of English verse by English lunatics. Here are two engaging examples from his treasury of remembrance. The first, of which the second and third stanzas are given, was composed by a female patient on the death of her bullfinch :

Whene'er thou saw'st me shut within
My room, thou cheerily would'st sing
   And all thy art employ ;
At thy loved voice, so sweet and clear,
All care would quickly disappear,
   My sadness turn to joy;
And all the troubles of my lot
Be dissipated and forgot.

Wise people do, I know, believe
That birds, when they have ceased to breathe,
   Will never more revive ;
But—though I cannot tell you why—
I hope, though Goldie chanced to die,
   To see him yet alive !
May there not be, if Heaven please,
In Paradise both birds and trees ?

These verses have a touch of the white fragrance of Cowper's elegiacs of domesticity. The second of Dr. Winslow's pieces was the work of a gentleman who was found by a Lunacy Inquiry to be suffering from "delusions of suspicion."

My feelings I can scarce restrain,
I find that I've been proved insane.
But what I've done, I've no idea
To hear my conduct's been so queer.
A loaded pistol I have had
In pocket lined with leather pad,
But though I carried this about
I very rarely pulled it out.
One day whilst smoking of a weed
A " Strange Man " was by me perceived
Outside my house in Cornwall Road,
lll omen then to me forbode.
I scaled the wall, but then, alas,
This " Strange Man " ran across the grass,
And giving me a heavy push
Was lost to sight in Lisson Bush.
At Ramsgate, too, on the Parade
I saw this " Strange Man " me evade.
Again upon the Harwich boat
I saw this " Strange Man " whilst afloat.
But who he is, or what's his name,
Or where he lives, or what's his game
In vain I've tried and used much skill
This " Strange Man's " vision haunts me still.

This doggerel is not displeasing, but it would not pass for poetry even in the least literary circles of Earlswood or Colney Hatch. Excepting a few limericks of a singularly fatuous type, such as—

I think it will be a fine day ;
Barometer's rising, they say ;
If barometer lies,
I'll bung up .my eyes
And imagine it is a fine day.

and a number of indistinguishable imitations of undistinguished hymns, nothing that could even be called verse seems to have been produced by the official lunatics of England. King Lear strides through the

everlasting rain with a few wretched straws stuck through his white locks. Is this yet another proof that the country is going to the dogs ? I call upon the alienists of England to consider the subject seriously and to devise some plan for developing the latent poetical faculties of their patients. It is intolerable to think that the intelligent foreign lunatic has a right to despise the latter as a lot of dull and uncultured Philistines.

II

BLUE FUNK

A GREAT many times in my life I have felt the lesser fear. That is to say, the fear "which grips you more or less firmly in spite of the opposition of the reasoning faculty; such, for example, as the sudden onslaught on your nerves when a ghostly noise, as of human footsteps, is heard in a hushed house at midnight, though you do not believe in the existence of ghosts. In all such cases the fear of fear in the end enables you to master fear ; or perhaps it would be as correct, psychologically, to say that fear consumes itself fearfully. Another alleviating factor is, of course, the habit of self-control in an emergency which, with Englishmen at any rate, is partly a racial instinct bred of much dangerous living to good purpose in bygone centuries. The English have always been a race of adventurers by field and flood:

> I deem the Englishman a Greek grown old
> Deep waters crossed and many a watch-fire cold

and the national habit of reserve, which the foreigner dislikes and distrusts, is really a form of perpetual self-discipline that enables the will to take and keep control in emotional crises of all kinds. Even in cases of " blue funk "—the greater fear, in which the sudden sense of deadly peril is confirmed by the reasoning

faculty—the instinctive exercise of will-power helps the Englishman to carry on with an outward show of calm confidence. For all that blue funk is a most distressing experience, which has curious physical consequences, and is never forgotten in the quiet after-years.

My first experience of this strange degree of fear, which occurred more than twenty years ago, is psychologically interesting (so the late William James, that master of the psychology of emotion, assured me), because the emotional and intellectual factors at work can be clearly distinguished. . . . I was living in Saskatchewan at the time, on the lofty banks of the north branch of the " Kisikitchewan" or Swift-flowing River, which hurries its broad flood along in a channel from 400 to 600 feet below the prairie-level. The Western spring had arrived with startling suddenness, as it always does; the snow had vanished in a couple of days, and the gaunt grey prairie was already touched with tender green under a soft sky of sparrow's-egg blue. Being a *moonias* (verdant green) Englishman, not as yet acquainted with the death-traps. Nature sets for the unwary tenderfoot in that weird wilderness, I made up my mind to go down to the river and try my luck at fishing. The ice had already run out; here and there masses of it were piled up on the low sandy shore. The lofty bank dropped down in a series of densely wooded terraces, encumbered with windfall and *brule,* through which it was a tedious business forcing one's way. So I decided to go down by a gulch or natural cutting in the high bank, which had been my customary path in the preceding autumn.

It looked as steep and solid and safe as ever—I never dreamed that it had become a sluggish cascade of mud, a toppling quagmire, owing to the draining down of snow-water from the vast unfenced meadows above! Half a dozen steps down, and there I was, already mired up to the middle, with no possible chance of getting out. Afterwards the old settlers told me that scores of cattle—but never a horse!—disappear in such cunningly devised death-traps.

I was afraid from the first, but blue funk did not supervene until a curious little incident caused me to realize—suddenly—that a wretched death was inevitable. Not far away, but altogether out of reach, was a patch of solid ground with alder-bushes growing in it. I struggled and swore under my breath, getting deeper all the time in the sticky, icy-cold mud. Then I became aware that a fixed and imperturbable eye, emotionless as a drop of black ink, was considering my hopeless struggles. It was the eye of a jack-rabbit (the Arctic hare indigenous in the North-West), comfortably couched among the roots of the alder-bushes. The jack-rabbit is a very timid creature; he is the prey of all the flesh-eaters in his customary wilderness. He ought to have cleared out the moment I caught sight of him. But he didn't—*because he knew very well that I was quite harmless, dead and done for!* Realizing that he knew, I also knew that it was all over, and the floor of my stomach dropped clean out, and the tragical landscape went round in a black, dizzy whirl. But I never lost sight of that imperturbable ink-drop of an eye, waiting and watching to see its vengeance wreaked on one of the most shameless of carnivorous animals. There were poplars on the prairie-rim high overhead, leaning over and stretching out their leafless branches in a fixed farewell. They

would have done as much for a cow. Then will-power took control, reasoning began again, and I remembered I had a fishing line and hooks in a submerged pocket, I extricated them, and fished for the top of an alder branch, and caught it, pulling it down towards me until a substantial stem could be grasped. Whereupon the jack-rabbit loped off in a hurry, and it was clear there was a possibility of escape.

My second experience of blue funk occurred in a recent night-mare of a curious type. Perhaps it was the resultant of meditation on the scientific puzzle of a Fourth Dimension, combined with too much reading of spiritualistic theories of the Hereafter. Anyhow, I was dead and disembodied, out of the world of the living, which appeared as a vast clouded crystal globe full of moving shadows, and engaged in talking to other vague, insubstantial beings. There was a touch of humour early in the proceedings. One of the dead-and-gone comrades laughed when I asked him where we were and what we were doing, and quoted T. B. Aldrich's famous " anecdote " of the two shades meeting in the Hereafter, uttering the last two lines :

" I do not know," the Shade replied,
" I only died last night "

in such a way as to make me subtly conscious of inverted commas. It is terrible to think that even after death one may have to be " literary " ; really I would sooner be compelled to agitate a tambourine at the behest of a paid American medium. Later on Somebody—or Some Thing—took me up to the cold, hard, transparent surface of the round, relinquished

world and explained the significance of certain strange monsters moving about in its cloudy spaces. "There's your past life," He or It said, as one of these monsters, a spidery thing, with endless intricate tentacles and enveloped in a bluish mist like the reek of a passing motor-car, moved sluggishly along in the foreground. I cannot remember much of the explanation that followed. But, broadly speaking, the twining tentacles were my past actions and the bluish reek the words I had uttered when living. The many monsters seemed to be fighting among themselves. And it was when I suddenly realized that this hideous creature was my mundane immortality, being built up of the still-proceeding consequences of acts and words, that the sudden horror of blue funk once more gripped my heart. Even when the state of death-in-sleep was ended, it was not until the clear light of a grey dawn flooded the bedroom that the residue of horror was finally dissipated.

III

CORNISH PICTURES

YOU go down to Little Beach, a mere hole in the grim, grey wall of the west shore, by a footpath that follows a singing streamlet winding under steep green banks gay with cowslips and violets, and, at the water's edge, hart's-tongue ferns. There is music all the way—that shimmering sound of tiny bells, which is the lark's song, the weird remote crying of unseen gulls, and the deep,""suppressed clangour of the distant breakers.

v Presently the stream emerges from a green covert, and runs broad and luminous over an expanse of white sand. Where fresh water and salt water mingle, two gulls are busy feeding. They run to and fro, taking little steps with their wings up, bobbing quaintly and curtsying low. If Phyllis Bedells, whose bright and innocent beauty has something bird-like in it, wants a Gull's Dance, she should come to these shining sands to learn it. There goes a sandpiper on the point all the way, light and elusive—what a mistress of technique ! The choregraphy of sea-beaches is as yet unexplored ; it is quite beyond the sultry, land-locked imagination of Russian dancers.

The gulls are off and away in a wave of the air, across the brink of evening, to join their crying companions out at sea. Looking down the narrow inlet, guarded by dark, menacing crags, I have a glimpse of the power and majesty of the Atlantic, all the tears

of all eternity ranged against us. Ten-foot waves turning over in dark-green curves and breaking in white, furious seething foam, send shadowy fluctuations through the quiet shallows at my feet. And beyond and above this fierce confusion, a part of the high ocean itself, of that dim, strait wall of wandering wave which has once more proved the bulwark of this dear green isle of ours.

Over the vexed waters, in the last flush of daylight, gleams a range of cloudland faintly aglow with the dying crimson of sunset. Lofty keeps, uplifted meres, wide jousting-places, thrones and principalities beyond our workaday world, cities afar of pearl and steel and chrysoprase—it is the legendary Cornwall which lives in the poetic visions of a thousand years.

Little Beach is a lonely place, yet not altogether lonesome. Climbing to a ledge above the shallows, I sat listening to the reluctant sighing of each withdrawing wave. Then in the shadowy depth I saw a fleeting shadow, swift and elusive and slipping seaward. There was no mistaking who and what she was, though I had but a moment's glimpse of her passing, and could not see her cubs, if she had them with her.

Probably they were born late in the year, and had been left behind—blind and downy still—in their soft-lined nest in the shelter of some inaccessible bank far upstream, while she, the swift and fierce matron, raced out to sea to find the food necessary for a night's supply of mother's milk.

Night is the otter's working day. You could fancy her agitating for an Eight Hours' Night. That is one of many reasons why this wanderer in the waters, fresh or salt, deep or shallow, is so seldom seen by the basilisk eye of the sportsman (so-called) with a gun. A second reason is its roving spirit. Male or female,

the otter is our one homeless hunter. It will travel twenty miles in a night; often the "holts," where it sleeps away the dangerous daylight, are ten or twelve miles apart. It will swim far out to sea, and dwell for a time on isolated rocks. It will climb heather-covered hills and sleep in the core of a cairn. It will eat anything from a plaice or an eel to a frog or a rabbit. It lays up no store of food for the winter. It knows its own track and will never retrace it. Never will it go back to a kill, howsoever full of blood, for experience has taught that danger lies in the briefest journey through the past—a lesson not yet learnt by men and women.

But motherhood is the most joyous thing in this beautiful and inscrutable creature's life of unending adventure. As soon as her young open their eyes, the mother otter will carry them to some safe place to bask in the spring sunshine. When they are seven or eight weeks old, she will take them to a quiet pool among sharp-toothed rocks, and teach them how to swim. Then they are taught to catch fish, how to trap eels and trout, how to find plaice hidden in the sandy shallows with only their silly, blank eyes showing. And how to eat fish in the right way, eel from the tail and trout from the head. And how to catch frogs and peel them, the skin being bitter and indigestible. And finally they are taught all manner of woodcraft in the neighbourhood of the family "hover," or camping-place. All of which is made the happiest kind of play for the cubs. Twice in my life—and how many Englishmen can say as much ?—have I seen a mother otter joyously joining in the gambols, including a subtle variety of hide-and-seek, of her lithe, evasive children. Not even a black bear gambolling with her blunt-nosed cubs and finding them roots and ants'

eggs is a more engaging sight. No wonder an old Cornishman said that otters are " the most play-somest critturs on God's earth." Male and female, they never lose the divine gift of playfulness.

There is a barrow, a lofty grave-mound, on the road to Little Beach. The buried warriors come out at midnight in their pot-like helmets and armour of leather and wire-capes. They have been seen sitting there, warming themselves in the moonlight and talking in an unknown tongue.

I don't suppose Arthur and his Cornish knights were as gentlemanly as Malorye made them, much less as genteel as Tennyson's heroes, epic shopwalkers in a well-decorated emporium of sentimentality. Probably the good old nursery rhyme

> When good King Arthur ruled this land
> He was a goodly King ;
> He stole three pecks of barley meal
> To make a bag pudding

gets nearer to their way of living than Malorye. Any-how the Cornwall that faces the Atlantic rollers is a rugged and frugal land which, but for its precious tin, could never have procured red wine from the Mediter-ranean and the other luxuries required at a regal banquet. It was not really worth while conquering from the east by the overland route followed by Saxon invaders, who could only fight well on a full flesh diet. So Cornwall, I believe, is much what it was in mentality two thousand years ago; a land possessed by people with the priceless gifts of adapta-bility (very like the otter's), and the deeply-rooted independence, out of which has grown a flower of neighbourliness, a simple courtesy, with the sweet, faint, homely perfume of cowslips. There is no pro-

pertyless class here; everybody owns a little and himself with it. So you see and hear nothing of the insolence in manner which is merely the obverse of a servility as yet ^incured. And for Cornish folk the revolutionary voices crying out of the city wildernesses have not so much meaning as the raving of the wind against their cliffs of killas and granite.

To be rooted in a few furrows of red soil, a field or two of wind-swept grasses ; to draw hard breath over spade or ploughshare; to breakfast at dawn, and go out to work, and dine leaning against a stone hedge (your own!) and come home to a hot supper, and find wife, children, and house trim and clean ; to love, hope, be merry, and pray—these are the things that make happiness hereabouts. Perhaps no better and more enduring happiness has been possible for man, since first he was moulded out of the earth—the red earth. Or will ever be possible.

IV

THE SCARLET SWALLOW

IT is a sad pity some of our young poets do not take up the pleasant task of celebrating the nation's games in noble numbers. They are a hefty lot, and most of them made excellent soldiers; and if Poets *v.* Novelists were included in the minor fixtures at Lord's, I am told that the fiction merchants would be in for a long spell of leather-hunting. Some of these poets are friends of humanity, eager to show their sympathy with the working classes in every possible way—so that it is hard indeed to understand why they prefer pulling up their emotions by the roots, that they may see how they are growing, to making songs and ballads about the *Ludi Humaniores* which are one of the chief interests in life for our sport-loving toilers in corduroys or black coats. Will none of our young " Georgians/' remembering that the late Rupert Brooke was a useful member of the Rugby XL, and in his school days always had a book in one pocket and a cricket ball in the other, take an innings at glorifying our glorious old game ?

The ancient Greek poets did not despise athletic themes, though Pindar—a too-inflated and high-falutin' author for my humble taste—did not give his patrons a square deal, when asked to commemorate the victor in an Olympic race or wrestling competition. He was too fond of indulging in genealogical and theological dissertations—just as though a modern poet, who had

received five guineas for celebrating the batting achievements of, say, the Ashtons (Winchester and Cambridge), should devote the greater part of his verse to a picturesque investigation of their family-tree and grandiose references to the various saints raised at Winchester and Cambridge in the past (the art of raising 'em has been lost at both seats of learning, I very much fear). It is an honourable task I propose to any young Georgian, who is not tangled up in the *vers-libre* movement, and it might be made a really lucrative job. Craig, the Surrey cricket poet,.has joined the majority; his genial face and cheery chaff no longer add to the gaiety of the crowds at Lord's and the Oval. I can hear his silver-eliciting voice—I myself would never take change in coppers from him—as he worked his way about the Mound Stand at Lord's : " Any gentleman here not got a copy ? If so, let him speak up—before I go down among the masses." I can see him with the mind's eye, hear him with the mind's ear ; if his verse was not precisely a long drink from the Pierian spring, his impromptu chaff was often as good as beer, noble beer. But how about the job he has left behind ? Why should not some young poet, who is in want of an easy, open-air life and a jolly good income, take it over ? There were times when Craig simply jingled with coins, cash overflowing all his pockets.

Time was when I myself hoped to graduate as a cricket poet. The late W. E. Henley, under whom I served a joyous apprenticeship to letters, once advised me to write verse about cricket and football and boxing and lawn-tennis, using the old French verse-forms—the ballade, especially—which are so admirably adapted for describing the ever-recurring burden of attack and defence, which is characteristic of all ball-

games (and boxing is a ball-game mostly, the other fellow's chin-point being the elusive pillule !). All that came of his advice was a ballade of an old-fashioned country umpire, who wore a cabbage-rose in his white robe of office (I have seen a century-old smockfrock used for that high purpose in a Sussex meadow) and dismissed batsmen by lifting his right heavenward, as though appealing to divine justice to ratify his decision. It ended in a sad, minor cadence :

> Death at the wicket stands watching Life's play ;
> In his white smock-frock he has pinned the rose
> Of Love sweetly fading. Though eager to stay,
> When he lifts his arm, the best of us goes.

And I also began a sonnet on the " End of the Season," which was suggested by the parting words of a blithe young Eton batsman, when we saw him off at a South Coast station after a joyous fortnight of country house cricket: " Lord, I perceive that all things come to an end, but that Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

There are, of course, a few cricket poets. For example, Mr. Norman Gale, whose lyrics in honour of a game he himself played with some distinction are inspired with a roseate enthusiasm almost too deep for rhythm and rhyme. He is one of the writers whom I shall choose to help me make a practice pitch in the asphodel-meadows when Charon has pouched my penny—probably the fare has gone up to twopence, like the letter rate. The anonymous author of the Harrow cricket-song, which in my time I have taught to more than one rustic eleven, to sing on the way home after a well-earned victory:

> Willow the King is a monarch grand ;
> Three in a row his courtiers stand.

Every day when the sun shines bright,
The doors of his palace are painted white,
And all the company bow their backs
To the King with his collar of cobbler's wax—

the author of this quaint lyric, which is set to one of the liveliest of John Farmer's tunes, ought to give us more of this staunch, home-brewed stuff, if, as I devoutly hope, he is still among the living. Andrew Lang, again, left one or two stirring cricket-poems. Then there was A. H. J. Cochrane, who got into the Oxford XI for his bowling, and his shrewd verse is very much indeed to my liking:

Sirs, I was taken off; expletives fail.
He did not use the weapon's edge at all.
They bowled him with an under like a snail.
This is the man that snicketh the length ball.

And I confess to having found great pleasure in the " Few Overs " of that fine cricketer and stanch captain, Mr. D. L. A. Jephson, who once took six wickets for twenty-one runs in Gentlemen *v.* Players at Lord's with his wily, varied underhand bowling. Some of our war-poets also have written about cricket both wisely and well. One of them relates the arrival of himself and two comrades in Heaven, and the first thing they saw there was a little green meadow, under lofty beeches, with their " layers " of shade, in which a pitch had been rolled out and the wickets set up—so they knew they would be joyful in Heaven ! They couldn't have been without cricket! And F. W. Harvey has a good poem, written at the front, about a hot catch in the slips, which brought back memories of his school (mine also !) by the beach of the much-murmuring sea:

Whizzing, fierce, it came
Down the summer air,
Burning like a flame
On the fingers bare.

He calls it a " scarlet swallow," and I have taken the phrase as my title to intrigue and entice the lieges, just as a bowler sends down a half-volley sometimes on the chance of a catch in the country.

V

NORTH-WEST-BY-NORTH

NOT until he has crossed the famous " Swift-flowing River"—the Kisikitchewan that was, the Saskatchewan of to-day and of an unending to-morrow—does the traveller begin to breathe the pure romantic air of the veritable northern wilderness. The shore he has left behind is already deforested and surveyed into town lots, or quarter-sections, most of which are privately owned; the shore on which he stands belongs to everybody and nobody, and is within sight of the " forest fence "—a broken dark-blue line in the northern horizon—of the most extensive forest-region in the world. Except along certain much-travelled waterways and in the vicinity of the various forts and factories of the Hudson's Bay Company, the whole of this vast territory of a million square miles is *terra incognita,* and likely to remain so until the oil-fields of Athabasca begin *to* be developed, or some surprising discovery of gold or silver brings in those indefatigable explorers, the placer-miners of the Pacific Coast. The mostaccurate map grossly exaggerates our knowledge of such a country ; for not only are many of the place-names, which take up so much space, representative of nothing in particular, but not a few also of the marks symbolizing rivers and lakes and mountain ranges are the merest guess-work. At the best such a map is a species of fiction, seeing that the lines which stand for rivers would cease to be

visible if they were really **drawn** to scale. If, however, we regard such lines as denoting the ribbons of territory about the water-trails which have actually been trodden by white men—hunters, trappers, traders and the like,—then the map would be accurately drawn, and the ratio between the total area of these black scribblings to the whole expanse of white paper would fairly represent the ratio between our little knowledge and great ignorance of the country. But after all, our map of the Far North of Canada is valuable not so much because of the geographical information it conveys, as because it is a record of the names and deeds of men. Where the names of Mackenzie, Simpson, M'Pherson and the rest are written, there are buried the works and days of men—Scotsmen whose names shall live on the lips of many generations of school-children ; which is a clean and simple kind of immortality.

As every retired officer of the Hudson Bay Company will admit, with a sorrowful shake of the head, he who has once wintered in this land beyond the " Swift-flowing River " must needs return again and again, if only in day-dreams and visions of the night. Even the writer of these impressions, whose experience of the so-called " white silence " was strictly limited in point of space and time, has suffered from that nostalgia of the snows—and still suffers whenever there is a yellow fog in London. Then, when he has drawn his curtains and shut out the dark and sombre twilight, he need only shut his eyes to see a small wedge-shaped tent standing in a clean expanse of snow—at the right is a tall brotherhood of darkly-green jack-pine—and under a clear sky. Whetherseen by night or by day, or, as most often happens, between sunset and moonrise, that long-forsaken landscape is bright with glimmering

colour, gay with shimmering sound. For in spite of the famous novelist from the South-East, there is no such thing in the North-West as the " white silence." Even at noon on the coldest February day—and that is the height and depth of. the North-Western winter—the sapphire hues of the mid-heaven are reflected or refracted by every atom of the diamond dust of the snows, until it is hard to say which shows the deeper tinge of blue—the airy spaces above, or the snow meadows beneath. For half an hour after sunrise, indeed, the question is easily answered ; for the zenith is a gleaming pool of blackness, full of " colours of gold," but every open stretch of unbroken snow is dripping wet with the azure light which has been rained down thereon since sunrise.

Again, if you move in the narrower and less garish day of the pine forests, though the snows thereof are white as leprosy, yet you will see above and about you lights and shadows of colour many and manifold. Where the sunshine trickles through the ruined roof, it descends in a scattering spray of faintly prismatic fire ; a ditty without words and without music of glinting colours. The grotesque snow-laden branches *in* the middle height are flushed with touches of crimson ; even so appeared Naaman's heavy arms stretched forth in thanksgiving when the healing blood began to flow again beneath the armour of his leprosy. The shadows in the undergrowth are intricate harmonies of the colours to be surmised, rather than descried, in the interval of wet sky between the two rainbows ; in all these harmonies the drone-note of an ultra-deep-marine is visible to the mind's eye. Moreover, the brushwood is everywhere alive with red, glistering sparks, berries as bright and angry as the face of Shagpat glaring out of its ambuscade of tangled

hair. And there in the hollow of a snow-drift a few yards to the left is the strangest of jewels—a veritable pearl of the central dusk, the only drop of blackness in all this delicately painted universe. Gather a handful of snow-dust—it is useless to think of making a snowball—and cast the glittering stuff towards this brooding gem, and lo ! a miracle of the woodlands. A portion of the snow-drift starts into life and flings a pair of elongated hind-legs high in the air and lopes off into a new covert. And, at the same moment, seemingly called into being by the same spell of silvery magic, heaven knows just how many of these fantastical creatures of the snow are leaping across your abbreviated horizon. Some you see, others you hear, but count them you cannot; for the last of the company is out of sight and hearing long before your handful of star-dust has lapsed to the ground. These are the jack-rabbits, a numerous race who make but little noise in their world. A faint *frou-frou* of parted snows and they are gone. Not until they are all gone—here is a curious fact—do the other inhabitants of the woodlands certify the invader of their presence First of all, certain tiny birds, no bigger than a June snowflake, begin to stir and twitter in the lower branches. Next in order is heard the whirring of the wings of a bush-partridge, who sees you though you cannot see him ; then, from behind you, is heard the croodling cry of a stray prairie-chicken ; and, last of all, a crick-crackling of dry willow-twigs tells you that the fox who was stalking that prairie-chicken is going elsewhere for his dinner.

But wherever and however its few hours be spent, the winter's day is white and silent in comparison with the winter's night. For an hour after sunset the same night-wind marches in all the countless tree-tops of

that endless forest-region, so that even if the traveller be camped in a wide prairie or barren waste out of sight of the forest, he cannot help hearing the noise of its world-wide marching. Then, indeed, as the twinkling stars increase in number, it would seem that a Power is kindling altar flames *in* the upper sky, and that another Power is striving to extinguish them with the wind of his wings. The name of the one and of the other are told in a certain Chippewyan legend. When that legendary strife is over and the stars burn steady in the blue-black sky, then other sounds and noises become audible. From the nearest scrap of bush comes the wailing of a coyote—a horrid sound as of a Utile child being tortured. A shadow passes along the moonlit south-eastern verge, and presently the cry of the snow owl troubles the air. In the lofty cancelled glooms of the forest depths are heard strange knocking noises, the cause of which is unknown to the oldest Indian. If *it* be the beginning of winter and the temperature falls suddenly the rifle-crack of a tree split by the frost blow is heard again and again. But if it be mid-winter and the mercury frozen in the bulb, then it may well happen that the ominous noise which was heard by John Ridd during the coldest winter England has ever known knocks at the naked heart. It is a noise of sobbing and of laughter commingled; a noise which begins in one quarter of the horizon and passes along the lower sky, and ends under the Pole Star ; a noise which begins as at a word of command and dies down into a weird remote whispering. " Spirits marching by night,1' says the Chippewyan seer, " to join the Dance of the Dead." And when he hears it he wraps his head in his brightly coloured blanket and takes refuge in dreamless sleep. That which he calls and thinks of as the " Dance of the

Dead " is, of course, the Aurora BoreaUs, which is seen every night and all night during the North-western winter. Among the green and golden flames of that ghastly conflagration is found the dismal Hades of the Indians of the Far North. Many an attempt has been made to describe it in words, and not one has succeeded, and it would be folly to add yet another to the long list of failures.

But concerning this chief glory of the sub-Arctic night there are two questions worth asking, to which no reasonable answer has yet been given. In the first place, why is it that some can hear the rustling of the wheeling flames while others cannot ? Secondly, what is the explanation of the fact that the red glow in the Aurora is only seen on a night when the temperature has fallen far below the freezing point of mercury ? To the stay-at-home Englishman it may seem incredible that a winter such as has been indicated may be comfortably spend in a ten-foot wedge-shaped tent pitched on the naked ground. Yet it can be done and is done by hundreds of professional trappers and hunters. The dryness of the air and of the snow which never once thaws between November and April, renders comfort possible in such circumstances. Given a good-sized camp-stove, a few planks to make a floor, and a heavy " robe " or rug made of furs—lynx tails for the master, rabbit-skins for the man—the veriest " tenderfoot " need not be afraid of getting his toes frozen in bed. To go to Davos Platz is a healthy and interesting way of spending a green English winter. But a winter spent in acquiring the delightful art of trapping somewhere beyond the " Swift-flowing River " would be just as healthy and far more interesting. But if anybody thinks of trying the experiment he will do well to exercise care in the choice of a hunting

companion. It is not wise to take either a full-blooded Indian or a French half-caste, a step which moreover necessitates the use of two tents. When the present writer served his apprenticeship to the North-Western hunter's life, he chose a Scotsman with Indian blood in his veins, and was doubly blessed in his choice. For not only had he many delightful experiences of the subtlest of all winter sports, but he also heard a thousand-and-one stories of a past which only lives in the memories of these " old travellers " who are generally called M'Kay. This one had another name, but his was an exceptional case.

Of the many tales told over the many watch-fires of those nights and days—the memory of which the writer treasures not altogether of his own free will—the story of the death of the last leader of the bison is most often remembered. It is grimly humorous and strange enough to be true. In the autumn of 1881 the main herd of the bison, which still numbered several thousands, was broken up and dispersed during a long spell of cold, stormy weather. The greater number of this remnant travelled into the Far South, beyond the boundary line, and none of them ever revisited the Canadian prairie-lands ; three years later, indeed, with the exception of a handful that fled into the foothills of the Rockies, they had all been slain. Of the rest, a large party, numbering between one and two thousand, journeyed into Southern Alberta, a favourite winter pasturage of their kind, and were exterminated by the hungry Blackfoot riders in the course of the two subsequent years. Another and much smaller legion retreated northward to the Qu'Appelle Valley and thence into the sparsely settled country which lies below the south branch of the Saskatchewan. Time was when a full and a particular

record of their dolorous march was written, so that he who rode might read, on the high prairies and along the shores of certain lakes, but the naked white bones of the victims of the Indian's trade gun and of disease, have mostly been gathered up—" Pile of Bones ", now called Regina, was once a centre of this traffic—and sold to make artificial manures. So that we must look for the memorials and epitaphs of these fugitives not in their native wilderness—but, wondrous are the works of commerce—in the gardens of New England and the cornfields of Old England. The fragrance, of a rose is but an ephemeral epitaph ; an ear of wheat is but a momentary memorial; and yet, to how many of us men will the modern Nemesis grant so much of remembrance ?

Moreover, one at least of these nameless wanderers has a more explicit *in memoriam ;* in point of fact he was and is, regarded by the old time hunters as a species of four-footed De Wet. In the summer of 1882 his commando, which numbered between four and five hundred, was roughly handled by a party of Sioux Indians—unbidden guests on Canadian soil—who chased it into the " bad lands " of Assiniboia and slew nearly three hundred, but could never get a shot at the leader. In the following year he and his company, less than a hundred all told, were rounded up by a gang of half-breeds from Duck Lake, and chased as far as the South Saskatchewan. The leader, described as of gigantic size and having one of his horns broken off short, again escaped with a following of but four or five. In the next year he was seen twice; on the first occasion by a Stoney Indian hunting for cattle in the vicinity of Battleford, and in the second instance by a duck-shooter from Saskatoon, who filled him with No. 4 shot, and then went home in a hurry. In either

case he was alone. In 1885 the year of the Rebellion, people were too busily engaged to see him. But in the summer of 1886 he was hunted for a whole week and twice wounded; and albeit he escaped for the time being, it was preordained that he should die before the first flurry of November snow. In those days one of the Batoche ranchers possessed a band of several hundred Highland cattle, creatures acclimatized to the North-Western winter, who were described as " bears with horns " by the Reserve Indians ; and it chanced that about the time when the sandhill crane fly south, two of this rancher's cowboys were sent out in search of them. They caught sight of the band at noon on the second day, and were amazed to see it massed together for all the world like a bunch of horses about a " smudge " or smoke-fire, when the flies are at their worst on a still, cloudy August morning. How could this be when the night frosts had long since slain the last of Beelzebub's progeny ? With much difficulty they broke up the throng, and there, where the centre of the swirling press of blood-maniacs had been, they found the torn and crumpled carcase of the mighty wanderer. He had escaped the wrath of man only to fall a victim to the rancour of man's slaves—and his own near relations !

Along the same well-beaten trail—but for all that so many million hooves have trodden it, we have no sure chart thereof—by which the hosts of the bison travelled into the Land of the Obselete, it is fated that the decimated armies of the moose and of the caribou, and of the musk-oxen must journey before many years have come and gone. It is long since the rearguard of the bison crossed into these viewless meadows by way of the " bad lands " of Assiniboia ; already the others are marching company by company

to the last rendezvous beyond the Laurentian Wall 3f glacier-borne boulders that was built centuries of centuries ago between the Mackenzie and Hudson's Bay. There behind those fragments of vanished hills, they shall stand a siege against the forces of humanity. For twenty or thirty or even fifty years they shall possess the desolate shores of that ice-ridden Mediterranean. And then the unseen and unheard signal shall be given for the longest and yet the briefest of all their marchings, and man, the indefatigable enemy of all these innocent and mighty creatures, the most shameless of the carnivora, shall vex them no more; unless indeed he contrives to add another to his beasts of burden by taming the caribou—the own brother of Lapland's reindeer. Moreover with these armies of the forests, and of the uplands and of the sea beaches, must pass away, pursued and pursuing, the last of the Indian trappers and hunters of the old time. He, if he may choose his way in death (as in despite of the missionaries he chose it in life), will not travel eastward to the Heaven of " Hymns, Ancient and Modern," but westward, as it were, to the Elysium of his heroic ancestors.

On one of the Reserves across the river—the Cree name thereof signifies " The Village of Sweet Grass/' but the townsfolk on the other side call the place " Little Chicago" for a good but unmentionable reason—once lived a very old hunting Cree, who steadfastly refused to become a follower of the white man's white Christ, though he was a regular church-goer in his latter years and the missionary's very good friend. It was not until he lay on his death-bed that the cause of this obduracy was revealed. " All that you say I believe," he replied, speaking in the Cree to the missionary's final exhortation, " but I do **not**

wish to go to your heaven. Many years ago, before Christ came to this country, my son, a great warrior, was killed by the Blackfoot nation and went to the Happy Hunting Grounds. I am anxious to see my son, and he will be pleased to see his father. But if I go to your Heaven, how can that be ? Never could we hunt together again/' So this old man died in his ancestral faith, and that sglf-same nigftt, I suppose, the death-fires were lit and the death-songs chanted by the oldest women of the band and a few of the youngest children. And the spirit, if not the letter, of those fire-lit songs of departure is kept in the following lines :

I will arise and go,
    And go to Pavenan,
Across the Meadows of the Talking Snow.

Ashes of men long dead
    That died by Pavenan
Cry from the trodden path or whisper overhead.

Well-beaten is the way,
    The way to Pavenan,
Whose lakes reflect the light of yesterday.

There if the seer spake truth,
    Spake truth of Pavenan,
I'll find the winged arrows of my youth.

Those wasted shafts I'll find
    I'll find in Pavenan,
And gather one by one and safely bind.

And on the western shore,
    Westward from Pavenan,
I'll hunt the vanished buffalo once more.

VI

CONCERNTS IN THE SKY

THERE are, of course, a great number of mechanical carillons in the bell-towers of England. But they are a species of aerial barrel-organs grinding out some familiar tune—more often than not a tone utterly unsuitable for bells—with the wearisome, mechanical precision of a conscientious governess killing Chopin on a worn-out piano (which afflicts me as would the drinking of cold claret or the wearing of cotton gloves, if ever I should mortify the spirit in such ways). To hear bell-music interpreted on the keyboard carillon, the most majestical instrument ever invented, it has hitherto been necessary to travel to Cattistock, in Dorsetshire, where M. Denyn, the greatest of the Belgian carilloneurs, gives a recital every year on the last Thursday in July on the carillon of 35 bells by van Aerschodt in the beautiful Scott tower of the Parish Church. Or you could go to Loughborough to the famous bell-foundry of John Taylor and Company, where 40 small bells of very perfect pitch are installed—of which a critic has justly observed : " It is the only carillon in the world tuned to equal temperament and the very accurate tuning of the bells is a veritable triumph." Indeed we can now make the finest carillons in the world—finer than any wrought of old by Franz Hemony, yclept, the " Stradivarius of bell-founders." That is why Rotterdam, though in the historic bell-land, came to

Loughborough for her new town-hall carillon, and America has also ordered an even more magnificent instrument for the central tower of her Washington War Memorial, each state in the Union to pay for one of the bells. Of the carillon of 28 bells at Eaton Hall, in Cheshire, and the more extended example at Aberdeen I know nothing, but have been told that the latter is installed in a belfry of granite, a material which smothers the sound in such a way as to suggest a musical-box wrapped up in a blanket. However, it will not be long before we shall possess a finer keyboard carillon than any in this brief catalogue—indeed, it ought to be the finest in the world, for it has been reserved for English musicians and bell-founders to find a complete solution of the intricate problem of casting and tuning bells. Loughborough has decided by a plebiscite upon the erection, as an eloquent memorial to her fallen fighting men, of a tower to contain a carillon of 45 bells, the largest weighing 3 tons. So, as Mr. Wooding Starmer, who is our greatest authority on bells and bell-music, tells me in a triumphant letter : " At last the long-looked-for event is at hand ! " Next year, I suppose, we shall be able to run down to Loughborough, busy in its far-listening countryside, and hear such concerts in the sky as in the past I have heard, when sitting in the Groote Markt at Mechlin under the vast tower of S. Rombold's, which is one of the marvels of the " frozen music " of Flemish architecture, though the stone intended for its spire was carted off to build a Dutch fortress, and so it has a queer decapitated look. This giant of stone is now a shell-scarred veteran of the war, and I am told some of its queer gargoyles have been destroyed.

It is a long time since I fell in love with the true art of bell-music, which has its ancient origin and home

in the Netherlands. More than thirty years ago I was cruising in a fishing-boat off the Dutch coast at night, and heard mysterious music, which seemed the moonlight on fleeting foam made audible. So far away it was as to be little more than coloured and patterned silence, and the gusts of the drumming wind in the open waters carried it away like strands of shimmering gossamer. But it was easy to be sure that a living artist, not a mere mechanical contrivance, was playing in his remote unseen tower beyond the leaping foam and darkling sea-levels, and the white glimmering fog-drifts along the low shore. I deemed it a faint, fair echo of the antique life of Gouda, wafted in wondrous wise from the far century in which Margaret loved and lost her Gerard until death brought the at-one-ment of other-worldly passion. But it may have come from any one of half a dozen belfries in the land which De Amicis likened to a green and motionless sea, where the steeples represent masts of ships at anchor—a still, calm country-side which imparts a peculiar, indefinable sentiment that is neither pleasure nor sadness nor ennui, but a subtle mixture of all three. Young and ardent in the romantic mode, I was then possessed by the poetry of Victor Hugo, and his lines on bell-music had then—as now, to-day—an appeal to the amorist of all that is strange in excellent beauty:

> Par un frele escalier de cristal invisible,
> Effaree et dansante, elle descend des cieux ;
> Et l'esprit, ce veilleur fait d'oreilles et d'yeux,
> Tandis qu'elle va, vient, monte, et descend encore,
> Entend de marche en marche errer son pied sonore.

Later on, visiting Antwerp and Bruges and Mechlin, I heard and saw greater carillons than any Holland

possesses, even to this day, and studied with delight the music that is expressly created for such tremendous instruments, which yet have their well-defined limitations, being neither super-organs nor exaggerated pianos. I attended the great competition of Belgian and Dutch carilloneurs at Mechlin in August, 1910, and was surprised to find how often the competitors chose pieces which were utterly unsuitable to the keyboard carillon. Music written for the organ was often selected, despite the obvious fact that, to do justice to it, a number of organ-stops were required, which, of course, the carillon lacked. Compositions having an oft-changing key, such as portions of " Tannhauser " and Mendelssohn's " Friihlingslied " (all chosen by certain competitors), should never have been attempted on the carillon. It was most interesting to hear how simple townsfolk and the humbler toilers, who trooped in from the country, were able at once to gauge the comparative merits of rival executants, and how they would shake their heads over an unfortunate choice. A quaint old white-haired peasant, lord of himself and a few acres of land, gave with closed mouth and clattering shoon a really apt impression of one of the ill-chosen pieces with the constantly swelling basses, which are very effective in orchestral music, but on the carillon make the playing dull and leaden, smothering the melody and obscuring all beauty and lucidity. Our young musicians must remember all this, and much else, when the great Loughborough carillon is in being, and they begin composing music for it. The carillon is so old and popular an instrument in Belgium that there exists there a general knowledge of its precise powers among all sorts and conditions of people. In Holland neither the standard of playing nor the critical appreciation

of the open-air audience reach as high a level as is customary in Belgium, where the tiniest town has its carillon and a skilful official carillon player. Concerts in the sky were universal in Belgium on Sundays before the war, and are being revived now the Germans have slunk out of the country. For bell-music is part of the soul of nationality there, a rhythm in the very heart's blood, and thus you get the rhyme current in the whole countryside within earshot of S. Rumbold's singing tower, which defines the playing on three successive days :

Saturday for the country folk,
And Monday for the city,
Sunday for girls who charm the boys
And make themselves so pretty.

With added zest, now that the Grey Plague has vanished from the long-ravished land, both townsfolk and rustics will listen to the concerts in the sky at Mechlin and elsewhere. And me, too !—as my grey-eyed three-year-old Sylvia says, shaking her red gold curls, when I am off to any concert in London.

VII

EPIC LIARS

I DARESAY nine in ten people would put " Falstaff, unimitated, unimitable Falstaff" (as Dr. Johnson called him) at the head of a list of the epic liars in literature. But he did not lie for lying's sake, as I take it; his exaggerations were an unconscious result of his vast joy in living, and that proportional burden of the flesh which caused Prince Hal to describe him as " this bed-presser, this horseback-breaker, this huge hill of flesh." Except that he was an arrant and shameless coward, Falstaff is really a type, seen in a distorting mirror as it were, of the boisterous and abounding Englishman of pre-Reformation days. His love of eating and drinking, his sleepiness, his coarseness, which has not a touch of depravity in *it,* his bluster and overweening vanity—these are essentially English qualities such as have caused us to be hated by the foreigner (especially by the dark, fantastical, introspective Celt, whose whole career in history is an age-long suicide by hunger and anger), but have given us dominion over all the races we have out-eaten, out-drunk, out-slept, out-sworn, and out-boasted. In Labour at the present moment we see the return of this lazy, lusty giant—and doubt not that when Labour finds food running short, and beer turning into water, he will be willing once more to out-work and out-fight the world as in the past!

There is nothing else **new and true to be said about**

Falstaff, who was not really one of the epic liars, for his lying was nothing more than a phase of the Elizabethan hyperbole, and so a part, perhaps, of the poetical strain that caused him to remember the dainty tune of " Greensleeves," and to play with flowers on his deathbed. . . . You need only cross the narrow seas and two wide centuries to find a more magnificent example of the epic liar in Baron Munchausen, a magnified example of the gallant adventurers to be met with on all the resounding highways of the eighteenth century. Though he tells us he was able to stop a leak by sitting on it, a thing he could do by virtue of his Dutch descent, I for one will never believe there was anything of the broad-beamed Hollander about him—any more than I should call him a Jew because he traced his lineage on the distaff side back to the wife of Uriah the Hittite. To give but one reason for refusing to believe he was a Dutch Westphalian " Munnikhousen," I find him a most chivalrous adorer of ladies, with whom he is preoccupied even when occupied in warlike matters. He makes the intractable horse, which he so speedily subdues, to mount a tea-table for the amusement of his fair friends ; he gracefully received the gracious proposals of Catherine of Russia; he was the favourite of the Grand Seignior's favourite; and evermore he is haunted by the Lady Fragrantia, who was " like a summer's evening, all blushing and full of dew." No wonder this gallant cavalier got the better of Baron de Tott with his little pig's eyes and a mere talent for lying ! M. de Crac, his French rival, would have had a better chance with him in a braggadocio competition, for he, too, loved and lied like a polished gentleman—and is not love for the sake of loving the finest **training in** the world for all who would act on

the glorious maxim: "If you lie, do not lie half-heartedly"?

Next to Munchausen I set Tartarin, of Tarascon, in my list of epic liars. Tartarin is a liar both in word and deed; each of his exaggerations is a kind of costume play *An* which his friends take appropriate parts. Major Bravida puts on black when he calls to compel Tartarin to "redeem his honour" by sailing for Algiers to shoot lions, and all he does at home and abroad is performed under the banner of Port Tarascon, the French flag across which *La Tarasque,* that bogus local beast, ramps fantastically. It is pleasing to find one link between the genius of Munchausen and Tartarin's—to wit, the rifle with a semicircular barrel for shooting round a corner, which is included in the latter's Algerian outfit of Arab clothes, a pharmacy, a patent tent, patent compressed foods, and so on. Tartarin is a wondrous creation; his psychology, as Daudet presents him, is jewelled in twenty-four holes. He believes in his own lies implicitly; and as long as belief holds, he is capable of brave doings out of sheer ignorance. Thus he conquers "greased pole climbs" *in* the Alps with speed and safety, because he has convinced himself that all the tales of danger were hotel-keepers' spoof, that as a matter of fact there were eider-downs at the bottom of every crevasse. The end of him vexes me more than Falstafi's death-bed and his crying out of "God, God, God!" — I can never forgive Daudet for that final picture of a sober, disillusioned, inglorious Tartarin scorned by his former disciples and preferring to die in a foreign town. The true Tartarin, like his insatiate South, would have rebounded even higher from the last and deadliest downfall.

A worthy companion of Falstaff, Munchausen, and

Tartarin in the ranks of Homeric liars is Pan Zagloba, of the famous trilogy of Polish historical novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz. Zagloba has been defined by Polish critics as the D'Artagnan of the great novelist's four men-at-arms (the others are Volodyovski, Podbipienta, and Kmita, but I do not think the lineaments of Porthos, Athos, and Aramis can be discovered in them, though they are all very musketeer-like). He has also been described as a combination of the crafty Odysseus and the scurril Thersites reduced to seventeenth-century terms. As a matter of fact, he is too various to be defined at all—he is a many-sided particoloured personality, as full of wiles as of venison and spiced mead, a very unwilling fighter who can yet be spurred to heroic deeds by sudden emotion, a faithful friend who nevertheless insists that his comrades learnt all they knew from him, a braggart who lives up to his braggadocio by the sheer irony of circumstance, a magniloquent liar whose colossal inventions are always greedily swallowed by the vain " kinglets " he manages, and a lover of women, whom he serves chivalrously in spite of himself. If Falstaff may be called a parody of the Englishman of the far-off days when a rustic could say :

> Ich care not for this Bible book;
> Tis too big to be true,

then Zagloba might pass as a caricature of the Polish character in the last days of *chevalerie,* when the sabre was still the final argument and " Lehistan " (the Turkish name for Poland) was the chief bulwark of Christendom against the vast armies of the Padishah. Zagloba lies mostly for purposes of policy—but his bravest tarradiddles are intended to glorify his own

obscure and mysterious past. Like Munchausen, he claims to have been the favourite of the Sultan's favourite, and he also points to himself as consulting strategist to the great Polish victors of past generations. It is in his habit of passing in a moment from a panic-stricken depression to the heights of time-defying heroism that he really represents the Polish nation of the century he is supposed to inhabit. Moreover, he has that power of reacting to the emotion of the moment, however subtle it be, which is the tap-root of the Polish genius. Poland can never be extirpated, because it resembles the sensitive plant (see R. L. Stevenson's " Vailima Letters ") not only in its quick sense of the other worldly influences expressed in Chopin's music and Conrad's prose, but also in its possession of an indigestible seed. Even Death could not digest Pan Zagloba ; any more than he could swallow Falstaff.

VIII

BEER, NOBLE BEER

BEER was, is, and shall be. A blithe and profound beer-drinker from childhood (when I went to my first school, and had one or two glasses of a curiously " small " variety at mid-day dinner), I cannot conceive of a state of being in which beer is not somewhere freely and frolicsomely on tap. It is the best of foods as well as the bravest tipple; even in the great antres of eternity the quick ear of an honest newly dead beer-drinker will soon catch the cheery noise, I am convinced, of the rolling forward of cosmical kegs. That is why I have so reassuring a recollection of S. H. Sime's picture of the Hereafter, in which brother-shades are seen marching heavenward along a sunlit cloud and lifting up their voices in the penny-on-the-canticle of " Beer, Noble Beer." Dead-and-gone they be, and disembodied—yet they remain Englishmen to all eternity, because their souls have not lost grip of the thing which matters most to England. Beer was, is, and shall be—blessed be the name of Beer !

In the course of a lifetime of fine, confused reading —and at college and afterwards I always " read " on a generous diet of beer, thereby obtaining power to digest the huskiest of first-hand authorities and courage to form my own opinion of their evidence—I have sometimes chanced upon heretical pronouncements against the [nobility of our national liquor. Dr. Johnson

was a large and mellow type of the essential Englishman, yet, by the irony of circumstances, he is supposed to have condemned the habit that made England what she is, in the epigram : " He who drinks beer thinks beer," We are compelled to see Johnson through the eyes of a pert, parasitical, whiskified wee Scotchman; it is like looking at a vast, timeless monument through an inverted telescope. There never lived a Scotchman who was big enough to comprehend the greatness of a really great Englishman—though by long devotion to such a duty, and by giving up whisky for beer, he may reasonably hope to apprehend it, I cannot honestly promise him more than that. If Johnson actually uttered this *obiter dictum*, we may be sure it was not intended for a *snobiter dictum*—that the great man meant to praise that quiet, effortless power of grave and profound thinking, or, better still at times, of avoiding thought which is one of the chief rewards of the judicious drinking of beer. I was once sitting in my college room (a single stately chamber looking out on a deer-park, having a large cupboard for my bed and another for my bath), profoundly immersed in a volume of Muratori's Chronicles—monastic pig-Latin it was, but full of curious first-hand history. A Charles II tankard of beer and a loaf of bread were on my table ; sometimes I paused for a pull at the tankard, and anon I soaked a crust in the gay golden fluid and threw it to the deer below the tall window. Enter a kind old don, pawing nervously at a long grey beard, who at once began to take me to task for drinking beer in the morning He quoted Johnson's saying; he told me that all the young men he had known, who drank beer for breakfast, had come to an evil end. " Anybody with a weak stomach/' I replied, " is bound to come to an

evil end ; the next worse thing is worrying about one's soul. Besides, I am playing cricket to-day; the match begins at 11.30." Youth and wisdom is genius ; add beer and cricket, and you get something almost too wonderful for this world of ours. I have been.

As France grows Burgundy, so beer is grown in England. The history of the two greatest nations *in* the world is summed up in that sentence. The true historians of England are those who have chanted the praises of beer, beginning with John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells, whose lusty song is the peculiar treasure of all devout beer-drinkers :

> Now let them drink till they nod and wink,
> Even as good fellows should do ;
> They shall not miss to have the bliss
> Good ale doth bring men to.

and arriving at last at Mr. Hilaire Belloc's heartfelt tribute to Sussex beer in all its varieties :

> They sell good beer at Haslemere
> And under Guildford Hill
> At little Cowfold, as I've been told,
> A beggar may drink his fill.
> There is good brew at Amberley, too,
> And by the bridge also ;
> But the swipes they takes in at the Washington Inn
> Is the very best beer I know.

Personally, I do not think much of any of the swipes tasted at various inns the last time I climbed up to Chanctonbury Ring. That was long before the G. A. era, during which the seeds of Revolution were sown in this country and watered by plenteous heel-taps of the wretched muck called " Lloyd-Garge " by the English working man. Wales has no national drink,

and for that reason alone it was the height of folly to allow a Welshman to insinuate himself into the Premiership. Mr. Lloyd George has deliberately tried, such is my deliberate opinion, to destroy the English Constitution (*it* should never be styled " British "—any more than you ought to talk of the British language !) by degrading the nature of beer and limiting its festive functions. It is a sad truth that beer is falling off both in quantity and quality. No longer can the true-blue Englishman say with confidence : " We'll drink it in the firkin, my boy ! " A jar (as used by those rigorous water-haters, the Thames fishermen to be observed in pairs in the vicinity of the Bells of Ousely) or the tiny barrel affectionately called a " pin " in some country places is the most you can hope for nowadays. As to quality, the poorness of the stuff commonly sold in town and country alike is scandalous—a political scandal, in fact! It is part of the Bolshevist plot, no doubt; infamous substitutes are probably being brewed by gin-drinking Jews behind red curtains. Moreover, the fine old college ales we loved of yore are no longer brewed within the precincts. In my Oxford days a most glorious ale (a liqueur ale in fact!) called " Archdeacon " could be tasted at Merton, which was at one time actually brewed in the sacristy of the College chapel, and was served in Hall at cheese-time in proper beer-glasses, resembling the old " flute " champagne glasses. I once procured half a gallon of this precious stuff for an elaborate brewing of a stanch, stinging diversion described in the eighteenth-century recipe as Ancient Hebrew Wassail. Joshua might have celebrated his victories *in* the stuff, which laid me out flat at the third glass, and two " Blues " put me in my little white bed.

Professor George Saintsbury's cellar-book contains menus of a number of poetical dinners, the wines and viands being named in separate columns. Why should we not design a luncheon for cricketers, say, in which beer plays the part of wine ? Here is a suggestion for such a brief and sufficing feast:

Lager Beer in glass-bottomed tankards.

Bass's Pale Ale in very long glasses.

Scotch Ale (the best varieties are to be obtained in the North of England) in glasses, any old kind.

" Archdeacon," to be served in tulip-shaped brandy-glasses if the proper beer-glasses cannot be procured.

Lobsters with salad.

Cold Sirloin of Beef with mashed potatoes and spinach.

Dringers. You will be surprised to find how well they go, in a curious oxymoron, with a strong biting ale.

Cheshire Cheese, Devonshire Butter, Home-baked Brown Bread, and Celery, preferably from a garden within 10 miles of the English Channel.

The batsmen whose knocks are interrupted by this beer-drinking episode need not practise abstinence. After that luncheon nobody will care who makes runs and who doesn't; the twelfth man, Mr. Extras, is bound to be top scorer.

IX

SEA LADIES

DO I believe in mermaids ? It is a question easily asked, not easily answered. The fact is there is a scientific son-of-a~gun in my ego which enabled me to practise as a professional mathematician in my youth and hunt iota (the elusive wonder-working root of minus one) down into its cunningest lair. His proper style, I suppose, is superman—and he flatly refuses to believe in any kind of spook or fairy or other—worldly creature, and is prepared to prove that the popular belief in merfolk originates in the occasional appearance of a seal *(Phoca vitulina)* on the lonely beaches of this isle of wonders.

On the other hand, I also comprise a simple, childish person, called the subter-man by some authorities—who acts consistently on the maxim *Credo quia incrcdibile,* being anxious to believe anything as long as it cannot be proved by process of reason. He it is who has made life worth living for me by the accomplishment of a variety of preposterous miracles. For example, he has caused me to look on commonplace females in the past with an imaginative eye that disclosed all manner of queenly graces and divine attributes—and still he has power to present a silly wench to me as a momentary empress because, forsooth, her nose is set at a certain angle and she wears certain rags of chiffon in a certain way, and for other

utterly unreasonable reasons. He *it* is who persuades me to pick up horse-shoes, and refuse to be the thirteenth guest at dinner, and carefully refrain from stepping on the places where paving-stones are joined together, and gaze into crystals with pins-and-needles in my very soul (if I have a soul) and lose hard-earned money betting on horse-races and boxing-matches. He also causes me to be horribly afraid of ghosts, though his occasional opponent—the superman, who has a queer trick of vanishing at eerie moments—can produce proofs of their non-existence, which would satisfy any rational being. And he compels me to believe in mermen and mermaids, whenever he beguiles me into passing the portals of the poetic fairyland or finds me holiday-making in one of the Celtic wonderlands (Ireland or Brittany or the Welsh Marches or Cornwall), where the living know they are but guests of the dead and are conscious in the daily routine of unseen or half-seen principalities and powers. And it is in these fairylands and wonderlands that I am more and more at home as I grow old, and my longing increases to be cured of the mania for doing and becoming and to be at rest for ever in the felicitous fields, where nothing of Achilles is left save valour and nothing of Helen is left save beauty.

One of the very first poems I ever got by heart was Matthew Arnold's " Forsaken Merman "—my father, a winner of the Newdigate who was too busy in after-life to write poetry, taught it to me line by line (my memory being then unimpaired by the slavish business of learning to read) and made me free for ever of the kingdom of the lords and ladies of the sea caverns :

> Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
> Where the winds are all asleep ;

Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye.

At the age of ten **I** saw my first mermaid, seated on a rock at the entrance to a deep cleft in the Cornish rampart of granite and killas and teasing me with flashes from her hand-glass. There was no mistaking her for a seal, seeing that she had saffron-gold hair which, as an ancient fisherman told me afterwards, is the sure-enough colour—" necessary to the wholesomeness of her," like the warping-chucks the painter left out of his picture of a brig moored at the Isle of Dogs. A little later on I got by heart the ballad of " The Mermaid of Padstow," which explains what dreadful penalties are incurred by mistaking a mermaid for a seal:

It is long Tom Yeo of the town of Padstowe,
And he is a ne'er-do-wecl ;
" Ho ! mates," cried he, " rejoice with me,
For I have shot a seal."

" Nay, Tom, by the Mass thou art but an ass,
No seal bestains this foam ;
But the long wave rolls up a mermaid's glass,
And a young mermaiden's comb."

The sun hath set, the dark clouds throng,
The sea is steely grey ;
They hear the dying mermaid's song
Peal from the outer bay :

" A curse with ye *go,* ye men of Padstowe,
Ye shall not thrive or win ;
Ye have seen the last ship from your haven slip,
And the last ship enter in."

Hence the Doombar, which prevents Padstow from being a really good harbour, a port of refuge on the deadliest iron-bound coast in this island, and will remain an obstacle, " unless," as the old men say thereabouts, " the parsons can find out the way to take up the merrymaid's curse." Alas, that curse-raising is a lost art among the parsons of to-day, who are so often a thought too scientific for their job. This ballad is an antidote to the story of the Bude mermaid, who was heard singing out on the Chapel Rock one night and seen by the vague light of a clouded moon—a creature with a long glittering tail and, of course, a comb and a looking-glass. The next night she appeared again, crooning her sad sea-song, and certain adventurous souls, being primed with old Jamaica, went along the breakwater to get a nearer glimpse, whereupon she plunged into the sea and vanished. She was, in fact, Hawker of Morwenstow, who then an Oxford student and much given to practical jokes, not having as yet arrived at years of discretion and the pleasant parsonage, over which he inscribed the quatrair. that is to be read there to this day:

A house, a glebe, a
A pleasant place to
Be true to church, 1
O minister, for ever

Wooden carvings of mermaids are to be seen in some of the Cornish churches, and no true Cornishman likes

to hear them made a jest of. So I will not tell the story in full of the painter from St. Ives who settled in a lonesome cottage in the parish of Perranzabuloe, and finally disappeared, shortly after being seen sitting with a smartly dressed girl (she had a red parasol) on the beach one Sunday evening. He had received large parcels from London, which he unpacked surreptitiously, and the receipted bills for them were subsequently discovered among his effects—and they proved he had spent nearly £80 on dressing up a sea lady, since there was no mention of silk stockings or shoes with silver buckles in any one of these " owdacious bills." Perhaps he had carried her down into the sea as happened on the last night of all in Mr. H. G. Wells's charming story of the sea lady who followed her beloved all the way from the Southern Pacific to Eastbourne. " There are better dreams," she said, when he was still too much intrigued with living ashore and his Marcella-like betrothal. Yes, there are better dreams.

X

ACCIDIE

MANY years ago the late Bishop Paget of Oxford (then a Canon of Christ Church and Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology) preached on " The sorrow of the world worketh death." No more memorable sermon was ever heard in Oxford ; and none that was more serviceable to its hearers, according to a friend of mine who is now at rest in India, having done more for his fellow-men in a brief life-time than many conscientious workers who have lived into a green old age. In his sermon, which afterwards appeared in book form, he dealt with that mysterious sickness of the soul, so common in the cloisters of the Middle Ages, which is called *Accidie* by Dante. It was much discussed at the time ; one humorist accused the Professor of inventing a new sin for the use of undergraduates. A jest of the same kind is perpetrated whenever it is said that appendicitis is an invention of the modern surgeon. Appendicitis, like Accidie, has always been with us. But in former days, before the nature of the disease was scientifically known and it could be artistically cured (medicine, like pastoral theology, is an art, as well as a science), it killed under another name or anonymously. Finding that his sermon had been serviceable to many, Dr. Paget wrote an essay to go with it, in which the history of the sin, known to mediaeval moralists as 'Ακηδία (of Cicero, *ad Att.* xii., 45), or Acedia (the Latin name used by Cassian and St. Thomas Aquinas),

or as Accidie to English writers, is exhaustively explored. It is alternatively described and defined as "the sorrow of the world" ; that is to say, the sorrow which is a worldly thing, a shadow projected within from without, and so manifestly non-spiritual that it is in very truth a negation of all spirituality. Dr. Paget's essay, which is a model of the right use of scholarship in the elucidation of an everyday difficulty, quotes what Cassian, a hermit of the Thebaid, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, and Chaucer have to say about this subtle disease of the soul, which, if it be not checked in its almost imperceptible progress, fills the whole heart with the acrid vapours of gloom and slothfulness as a test-tube is filled with the heavy, green, choking fumes of chlorine gas. Cassian gives a very minute account of the victim's condition ; Chaucer, being a dramatist and more concerned with its external effects, calls it succinctly the "roten sinne," seeing clearly that it brings about a state of spiritual and even physical corruption. But Dr. Paget's description is the best *to* be found anywhere through the ages. According to him Accidie is :

The mood of days on which it seems as though we cannot genuinely laugh, as though we cannot get rid of a dull or acrid tone in our voice ; when it seems impossible frankly to "rejoice with them that do rejoice" and equally impossible to go freely out in any true, unselfish sympathy with sorrow ; days when, as one has said, "everything that everybody does seems inopportune and out of good taste" ; days when the things that are true and honest, just and pure, lovely and of good report, seem to have lost all loveliness and glow and charm of hue, and look as dismal as a flat country in the drizzling mist of an east wind ; days when we might be cynical if we had a little more energy in us ; when all enthusiasm and confidence of hope, all sense of a divine impulse flags out of our work ; when the schemes which we have begun look stale and poor and unattractive as the scenery of

an empty stage by daylight; days when there is nothing that we *like* to do—when, without anything to complain of, nothing stirs so readily in us as complaint.

You and I know that mood only too well, do we not? There is not one of us all who has not suffered from it, without as a rule understanding the how and why of the suffering. Friends, contemplating this misery of Accidie in us, use a monosyllable of slang, and keep out of the way until the gloom breaks and dissolves—lest some taunt or unjustifiable reproach be launched at them out of the sick darkness or lest they themselves be caught in the contagion. A blue mist, like the visible presence of the Black Death in the meadows of mediaeval Italy, seems to encircle the victim of this vague and monotonous misery. At its blackest Accidie is the background of suicidal thoughts; it was the moroseness of Alexander when he slew his dearest friend, the madness which caused Saul to point his spear at the musician of Israel. For all that we commonly speak of it as a trivial matter, the least of all the sins, and, indeed, not a sin at all—for nearly always we explain it as the result of some physical failing, a touch of liver or what not, and as such excusable. Sometimes, more subtly still deceiving ourselves, we attribute it to a recrudescence of some past sorrow; like Mrs. Gummidge, a chronic sufferer from Accidie in a rather mild form, we lead our associates to believe we are "thinking of the old 'un," brooding over some bygone loss that can never be made good in this sublunary sphere. There is, in truth, no lie which we will not enact at such times in order to embezzle the sympathy of our friends. We even delude ourselves so as to feed on self-pity, the most dangerous of mental drugs!

At first sight there is something to be said for regarding Accidie as a physical ailment rather than a physical disease. Both Cassian and St. Thomas Aquinas have discussed this point of view and dismissed it as incorrect. The fact that it is compatible with perfect health seems conclusive. No doubt this disease of the soul, like any other, is harder to resist, indeed appears irresistible, when the physical forces are weakened by illness or worry or overwork. This fact must always be taken into account when we see others overwhelmed by an acute attack of gloomy slothfulness, sullen joylessness. But it is better not to use it as an extenuating circumstance in one's own case. " It will do us no harm," Dr. Paget advises, " to over-estimate the degree in which our own gloom and sullenness are voluntary; it will do us very great harm to get into the way of exaggerating whatever there may be in them that is physical and involuntary. For the border-line over which Accidie hovers is, practically, a shifting and uncertain line, and *possunt quia posse videntur* may be true of the powers on either side of it. We need not bring speculative questions out of their proper place to confuse the distinction of the practical issue." Seeing that a spiritual shortcoming often brings on a physical failing (see, for example, the effect of fear on the appearance and physique of a man), it is good psychology to hold that what seem the physical conditions of Accidie are perhaps in nine cases out of ten merely *sequela?* of the spiritual sickness. However that may be, Accidie can never be excused as a phase of sorrowfulness. In all worthy sorrow there is a stirring, a striving towards a new equilibrium of life. As Spinoza says with deep truthfulness : " Tristitia est hominis transitio a majore ad minorem perfectionem." Consider the case of one whose whole life seems to have

been shattered by the loss of the nearest and dearest of all human companionships. But half of him is left, and the worse half as he feels ; yet, if true manhood be left to him, his eyes are not so blinded with tears, his hands are not so tremulous with pain, that he does not busy himself for health's sake in rebuilding his ruined world, if it be only to make a decent tomb out of the wreck of a temple that towered to heaven. Accidie is the false sorrow; it is " the sorrow of the world" or a phase thereof.

An interesting dissection of a cloistral sin (some practical critic will now say), but what in the world has *it to* do with the restlessness which is unquestionably a feature of the life of modernity ? It has everything to do with it (I reply), because Accidie is a more common complaint to-day than it was even in Cassian's far-off century, and the restlessness of the age, the endless and engrossing quest of excitement, is neither more nor less than the modern world's plan for escaping it or curing *it.* Ask anybody why he or she rushes off the moment it is possible to escape from the work that must be done, and the reply in nine cases out of ten is, " Oh, I can't stay at home and bore myself ! " or words to that effect. How many times have you heard that excuse given for a meaningless waste of time and energy ? How often have you given it yourself ? The truth is that the modern man or woman, even the modern child, will do anything and everything to avoid his or her own company. But why ? I can see no reason except a desire of self-preservation, an earnest wish to avoid the boredom which is an ever-present danger to a generation that has become much more dependent on material aids to existence than any of those which preceded it. But this malignant boredom,

this feeling of one's insufficiency to oneself, is nothing more nor less than the first stealthy incursion of the spiritual disease under discussion. . . . Question your familiar friends, question yourself, and you will presently become convinced that, with a few thrice-happy exceptions, we are all trying to run away from the misery of Accidie. It is *the* spiritual disease of the twentieth century; it has infected our literature as well as our lives with the joylessness or, worse still, the pretence of joyousness which are the chief primary and secondary results of its grip on the human soul. Anatole France is a conspicuous example of the great artist in logomachy whose unresting brilliance coruscates against a background of hopeless gloom—like summer lightning along the horizon of a night without moon or stars. He is merciless, because he sees no mercy for himself in the whole circuit of his darkened universe; the anti-Semitic foes of Dreyfus and the Jews, the origins of Christianity and the legend of the French Revolution, have been in turn the theme of this spiritual Nihilist's hopeless satire and helpless scorn. Gerard Hauptmann is another type of the victim of chronic Accidie whose pessimism transcends that of Nietzsche, because it has ceased even to believe in itself. In this country Mr. Galsworthy and nearly all the younger " intellectuals " are subject to a profound dejection, which is seldom indeed lightened by such transitory gleams of hopefulness in an idealism that is to come as inspired Alfred de Vigny's famous line :

> Le vrai Dieu, le Dieu fort est le Dieu des idees.

It is true that they insist on thinking of themselves as idealists. But that is because they mistake " la passion de la these " for idealism.

Is there, then, no remedy for this ubiquitous disease, a Protean plague, which is even able at times to disguise itself as one of the more artistic virtues—more especially as a form of fastidiousness ? There is, I am convinced, no general remedy ; what will cure Accidie in one case will but increase the evil in another. But, generally speaking, the disease is not to be cured or prevented by running away from ourselves and our work. Excitement is but a momentary palliative ; when its action ceases a period of reaction follows, during which the disease gets a firmer grip of its victim. But whatever strengthens in us the capacity of sympathy with mankind or with Nature helps *in* the struggle against the many-tentacled monster of inward corruption. There is nothing which so surely relaxes its tentacles as the noble contagion of a keen and sacrificial sense of the real pain and sorrow which are to be seen on every side of us—unless it be sympathy with the joyousness of others, more especially the innocent glee of children. And, as Meredith's poetry teaches us, fellowship with Nature is one of the surest and simplest remedies. The history of the incidence of Accidie supports this contention. The hermits of the Thebaid suffered from *it* terribly ; so did their successors in after centuries, when the ascetic life had been organized as a profession, so to speak, and societies were established in order that individuals might cooperate in the saving of their souls. But the " world " from which these seekers after saintliness fled was no mere symbol of evil communications and courses; it was the actual, visible earth with its hills and birds and beasts and flowers, and all the imagery of the seasons, all the glories of sunset and sunrise, in which the *flammantia moenia mundi* are revealed.

St. Bernard, walking round the Lake of Geneva, blind

to all its beauty and unconscious of its very existence, is a type of the mediaeval fugitive from the world and its allurements. But there was one corner of Christendom in which a loving association with the moods of Nature was never regarded as a sin. In Ireland the hermit or member of a community of monks found in Nature only the symbols of spirituality. The spring by his doorway was a type of the day-spring from on high in which sin is washed away; the birds singing in the dawn were God's choristers; the wild beasts prowling through the night were a congregation gathering to praise Him. Among his feathered and furred friends, God's pensioners in very truth, the Irish hermit read his Hours and performed his cross-vigils in peace and joyously, and, as Marvan did when his brother, King Guaire of Connaught, stood at the door of his sylvan cell and wondered at his way of living, would often make songs in praise of Nature. As in the Song of Manchan, he would sing:

This is the husbandry I choose, laborious, simple, free,
The fragrant leek about my door, the hen, the humble-bee.
Rough raiment of tweed, enough for my need, this will my King allow;
And I to be sitting and praying to God under every leafy bough.

These russet-robed visionaries had their faults, no doubt. But they never suffered from Accidie. Unquestionably Nature's simples are efficacious against the disease. . . . There are many other remedies. Dr. Paget advises the sufferer from an acute attack to occupy himself with "the comparatively featureless bits of work" which do not depend on the weather of the mind. Others, myself included, find the reading of a little good poetry a sovereign tonic. The comradeship of certain outdoor games may also be prescribed

in many cases. But different constitutions require different treatment, and every sufferer from Accidie must find out by experiment what suits his case.

The slang term for Accidie is " the hump." You will have guessed as much long ago. Kipling speaks of the " cameelious hump " somewhere, and advocates gardening as a remedy—as, indeed, R. L. Stevenson did in one of his Vailima letters. If all who read this dissertation on a spiritual disease which is a much deadKer thing than most people imagine make a serious effort to avoid " getting the hump " in future I shall not have preached my lay-sermon in vain.

XI

LOVE OR EUGENICS

BOLSHEVISM as a political force has sufficiently defined itself by its words and works. As such it is merely a single phase of a spirit of antagonism to all existing institutions, including even the ancient sanctities of natural living, which would have us believe that Man, by destroying all he has built up in the past—all that he has done, and all that he has been—can clear the ground for the construction of an earthly Paradise. The Bolshevist philosophy is " agin the Government " of the universe, whether it depend upon God or his servant Gravitation ; he is eager to untie all the " nots " in the Ten Commandments ; he would even incite humanity to revolt against human nature. He is the victim of a cosmical grievance, of a sickness of the mind, which prevents him from seeing that the character impressed on man by an upward and onward struggle extending over millions of years, cannot be changed in a day by a Soviet resolution. And he veils his utter lack of wholesome common sense by the adaptation to his fell purpose of any and every theory of pseudo-science—among them Eugenics, whereby it is proposed to supersede the form of natural selection known as Love. All property is to be abolished, cries the Bolshevist; and *qua* Eugenist he hopes to put an end to the old and beautiful habit of falling in love,

whereby the tenderest at-one-ment of mortal creatures is joyously achieved.

Love, the professors of Eugenics declare, is a fallacious guide to right mating for various reasons. It depends, largely, they say, on the sudden perception of ephemeral advantages, such as a pretty face or a handsome carriage. Moralists have always cherished a grudge against beauty—being, as a rule, elderly and unbeautiful persons, who never awaken the interest that is felt in the bright charm of starry youthfulness. Vet, as Herbert Spencer said (long before Darwin's selective theory was formulated) " the saying that beauty is skin-deep is itself but a skin-deep saying." I can forgive that frowsy philosopher even his ear-flaps for such a profoundly wise epigram. In truth beauty is one of the very best guides we can possibly have to the desirability, so far as race-preservation is concerned, of a particular alliance between man and woman. Beauty in either sex is not only a guarantee, as an almost universal rule, of good health ; it is also a spiritual thing, a shining assurance of mental and moral efficiency. The best-looking people are the best-hearted; nearly always they possess that *joie-de-vivre* which makes for kindliness and generous impulses *in* conduct. I always distrust ugly people, and, though there are many exceptions to the rule, this withholding of confidence until one finds that the ugliness is only skin-deep, is a very useful precaution, I have found. So it is well for the human race that a man or a woman, when the vernal impulse of love at a glance storms the heart:

> Who ever loved that loved not at first sight

insists on choosing a good-looking mate.

Falling in love is commonly regarded as a miracle and a mystery, and we are often puzzded, to be sure, by the apparent capriciousness of the process. We are constantly exclaiming : "I wonder what so-and-so could see in such-and-such-a-one ? " But the scientific truth is that so-and-so sees more clearly than we do, having borrowed Nature's eyes as it were, to find his or her complement. And there are certain broad generalizations to be made about this mystery of love selection, which helps us to understand that wise old Nature, that incorrigible match-maker, very well knows what she is about. It is a matter of common observation that, for example, men and women seeking a mate prefer outsiders, fresh blood, somebody from a far community, whose ways have a touch of novelty. But this is Nature's plan for assuring mankind against the physical, mental, and moral disadvantages of inbreeding, which is the curse of a small and isolated community (e.g., a valley walled in by vast mountains), and may even lead to the creation of a brood of cretins. Again, it is proverbial that the choice goes by contraries. Short men prefer tall women, tall men prefer short women. Dark pairs off with fair ; the original minded, often to the amazement of their friends, run after commonplace souls " with nothing in them." And this is, of course, Nature's well-devised method of ruling out extreme types ; for if short always married short, and tall tall, the human race would in course of time split up into two distinct species, giants and dwarfs. And choice by contraries is the final proof that each individual naturally seeks his or her natural complement.

If Nature had her own way entirely, I feel sure the professors of Eugenics would not have a leg to stand on. No, instinct always acts infallibly; Love has its

failures, but normally, with good material, it is singularly successful in maintaining the standard of a race, or even improving it. The pity is that Love never really gets a fair chance in highly civilized communities, where man is always forgetting that at bottom he is one of Nature's pensioners and prospers in the long run in proportion as he obeys his dread patroness. Love-marriages are discouraged on the score of expediency ; young people are exhorted to marry for social position, money, preferment, for the advantage of parents and relations. Among small religious sects they are forbidden to marry outsiders; Quakers, for example, inculcate " marrying in " as a duty, the only advantage of which is that the sect amasses great wealth with disastrous results. And here comes in the great utility of the modern novel which is so often condemned for the " love interest" it so emphatically enforces. Great and little, artistic or commercial, the modern novelists have preached from the test: " Marry for love, and for love only." So they are all to be praised for giving the lie to the unnatural dictates of societies corrupted with self-seeking, and are none the less to be honoured for so doing because they have trampled on social conventions with a conventionalism of their own.

Against the noble and enthralling achievements of Love in all ages and climes, how can the pseudo-scientific promises of Eugenics count at all ? All the professed Eugenist (really a type of Bolshevist) has to go upon is a certain qualified success in the breeding of domestic animals for a physical purpose. Race-horses are bred for speed and staying power, and to some extent the problem has been solved. But you do not get in this way a type, which has the strong, natural, adaptable constitution that is the most

precious of physical assets. As for breeding for human beauty, brain-power, and the soul on fire with spirituality, the idea is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment. So unless Bolshevism gets the upper hand in this country, we shall continue to fall in love instead of going before Engagement Boards to obtain the permission of a soviet of plumbers and professors to walk and talk with the best-beloved under the Harvest Moon.

not, though they appeal to a strange and abiding nostalgia for, it may be, the mysterious green jungle from which man emerged upright. Mr. Kipling is a master to-day: his " Barrack-room Ballads " are worth all the cleverest *bergerie* of the Georgians. And it cries from the dust in an epitaph inscribed on a husband's grave in a dove-haunted Kentish churchyard :

> I coo and pine and ne'er shall be at rest
> Till I come to thee, dearest, sweetest, and best.

and in that wonderful lyric on the wall of Burford Church, in Oxfordshire, which concludes :

> Love made me Poet
> And this I writt,
> My harte did do yt
> And not my wit.

But there, burning in the cold stone, is the best prescription for the greatest poetry, most serviceable to the soul of man, which teaches us that Love is the only thing that matters and that Death then matters not at all.

XIII

VACHEL LINDSAY'S POEMS

TIME was when the word " rhythm " had an occult and mysterious sound. The careful dissectors of metrical structure could never tell us what *it* really meant. They lectured us about spondees and dactyls, anapaests and amphibrachs, and provided the poetaster with plans and specifications for constructing any kind of a poem—with the result that the output of mere mechanical prosody, as distinguished from living poetry, became a prodigious nuisance. They never knew that the rules, based on syllable-counting, exist only to be broken (as the practice of the greatest English poets show us) and that rhythm, the harmonizing of a poem *as a whole* with the ebb and flow of the emotion that inspired it, is the main source of a poem's vitality—the beating of the heart, as it were, which makes it a living, breathing, perhaps immortal, creature. And, not knowing this great principle of the criticism that is creative, they did not see that the progress of poetry consists in the discovery of new rhythms to fit the new emotions of a new age, and greeted the work of eager young experimentalists (such as the author of " The Barrack-room Ballads ") with sniffs raised to the power of ° thunderous huff-snuffs " and with pontifical frownings.

But where are the new rhythms of a new age to be found ? In the spoken speech of the people, of course ; in the so-called prose of everyday discourse, in which

we communicate our emotions in colloquial cadences that are often remembered to the end of a lifetime. It was Mr. Kipling who first found in the living speech of the people new and appealing rhythms which could be used as the seeds of crowd-compelling poems. The common people were good enough for him (as he said and sang not so long ago), for he resembles Lincoln in believing that the common people must be the best people after all—else why has God made such crowds of them ? Here is one of innumerable examples of the way in which he has grown a green, living, joyous poem out of a familiar three-word colloquialism. " Here we go " (accent on the first word) is a phrase of action which none of the old cloistral poets would ever have admitted into their solemn word-symphonies. But Mr. Kipling, contemplating a " branchy row " of monkeys in his mind's eye, knew it was absolutely the right gambit for his road-song of the Banderlog :

> Here we go in a flung festoon
> Half-way up to the jealous moon !
> Don't you envy our pranceful bands ?
> Don't you wish you had extra hands ?
> Wouldn't you like if your tail were—so—
> Curved in the shape of a Cupid's bow ?
> Now you're angry—never mind,
> *Brother, thy tail hangs down behind I*

There is an open-air joyousness in these lines, all in the key of the blithe opening phrase, which makes you wish you could climb back up Man's family-tree and travel with four hands and a prehensile tail through the forest-seas of green leaves and branches. That was the effect the poet wished to get, and he got it !

It is because he so abundantly uses the musical rhythms of colloquial speech, and with such an

unexampled exuberance of simple glee, that Mr. Vachel Lindsay must rank as one of the greatest of modern American poets. Indeed, Mr. W. B. Yeats, whose *curiosa/elicitas* in the making of verse ministering to our sense of wonderment has never been surpassed, has hailed him as the first American poet of the day. He is certainly the most popular, and severe critics of the Bostonian sect distrust and dislike him for that reason.

Unquestionably he is the mightiest master living of modern colloquial rhythms. He combines them in helter-skelter symphonies, full of gusts of orchestral colour, the music of which comes in wave after wave like the wind in a leafy tree. His poem of General Booth's entrance into Heaven is already well known on this side of the Atlantic; on the other side, when it appeared, it was as strangely and suddenly successful as Edwin Markham's " Man with the Hoe." Millions found a joyous spiritual truth in its plain tambourine-music (remember Mr. Kipling's verse is often banjo-stuff !) of the General deploying his wastrel hosts in the golden streets and of their golden change into good citizens of the high City of Eternity :

> Sages and sybils now and athletes clean,
> Rulers of empires and of forests green.

This utterly unorthodox poem was a success for the very same reasons that the Salvation Army was a success. And it revealed to Old World critics a poet as powerful and unexpected as Walt Whitman, who is easily first of the *vers-libristes* even now. But there are other and even more enlightening high-speed reveries in his books. "The Kallyope Yell" is one of my favourites, for I have often heard the engine's

steam-driven ecstasies on circus day in little trans-Atlantic towns, its blaring " Willy, willy, wah-hoo ! " and the mechanical pathos of its " Szz-fzz " or final fizzling-out. The triumphant burden of its full-pressure exhortation to pleasure-seekers :

I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope,
Tooting hope, tooting hope, tooting hope, tooting hope !

runs through every stave of this impressive canticle or jazzing *Jubilate* for humble holiday-makers. Then there is " The Congo," which is full of the exuberant glee of American niggers and their corybantic religion, so sure of its efficacy that (as in the " Negro Spirituals," so artistically interpreted by the Southern Syncopated Orchestra) it can give hymns the form of a popular comic song (which was also done by the Salvation Army in the " Bells of Hell " and other crowd-collecting ditties). Here is a stanza from this quaint outpouring of barbaric joy, through which a black but comely Muse jazzes and cake-walks :

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able
Boom, boom, boom,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
Then I had religion, *then* I had a vision,
I could not turn from their revel in derision.

Then I saw the Congo creeping through the black,
Cutting through the forest with a golden track.

It is, perhaps, in " The Santa Fe Trail" that Mr Lindsay's rowdy virtuosity is most picturesquely

displayed. This poem is written in three tunes, the first of which is a crashing, blaring tune, full of discords, designed to give a noise-picture of the motor road that runs out to Kansas parallel to the railway track :

> **On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills,**
> **Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills . . •**
> **Ho for the tear-horn, scare-horn, dare-horn,**
> **Ho for the gay-horn, bark-horn, bay-horn.**
> **Ho for Kansas, land that restores us**
> **When houses choke us and great books bore us.**

The second is a quiet, muted rhythm; to fit the emotions of the traveller arrived in the green fields of Western felicity:

> **My goal is the mystery the beggars win.**
> **I am caught in the web the night-winds spin.**
> **The edge of the wheat-ridge speaks to me ;**
> **I talk with the leaves of the mulberry tree.**

And the third is the song of the small melodious bird known as " Rachel-Jane " to negro workers in the tilled corn-lands :

> **Love and Life,**
> **Eternal youth—**
> **Sweet, sweex, sweet, sweet!**
> **Dew and glory,**
> **Love and Truth—**
> **Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!**

Many critics are as angry with this stuff as their pontifical predecessors were with Walt Whitman's. But I have no doubt in my head, since he stirs my ageing heart to young spring-tide joyousness, that Mr. Lindsay is a new and a true poet.

XIV

THE MINER'S SCRIP

EVERYBODY else is digging up his (or her) past, so why shouldn't I? . . . A great many years ago I went treasure-hunting with the free miners of the Far West, and though it was never my luck to demonstrate the truth of the Toronto professor's saying that " gold is found wherever you can find it, " I got full value for my squandered time. We never chanced on " coarse gold " in any of the gravels assayed with pick and pan, and my only real discovery was a splinter of spinel ruby on a North-Western river, which may have been part of a gem that " growed " a thousand miles away up stream. But the greatest authority on precious stones then living assured me that spinel ruby had never before been found in Western America. There were better prizes—for example, the acquisition of robust health, a bosom-jewel unknown to townsfolk, which made the mere act of living a joyous thing, and gave me a straight left that came over as smooth and solid as a piston rod. Yet there was a still richer reward—to have known the free miner of the Far West and the High North and to learn how lusty and lovable an animal man may be when all the trappings of convention, from drab spats to a genteel accent, have been cast away.

On my return to the settlements I tried to fix in homely verse the free miner's quaint humorous outlook on life, his tall tales, and his mirth-provoking

whimwhams. I began, of course, with an invocation to the miner's muse. The supposed poet could not hope for Homer's good fortune :

When old man Homer, fust of old-time sharps,
Ez earned their beans lambastin' stand-up harps,
Was startin' in to sing, he'd up and use
His introduction to the lady Muse.
And she, the purty piece, so slim an' sweet,
Wearin' no duds except a skimpy sheet,
Would slither down, an' sidle up, an' sit
Ez near to him ez he to her c'ud git.
Yes, sir ! When that old hobo chanced to nod,
The goddess kissed him like an orn'ry god !

Yet a Muse of sorts he had :

Smooth slopin' shoulders, long an graceful neck,
An' pretty perky head-piece held erec',
A smile all over her that made you frisk}'.

I leave you to guess the rest; it is a sad, glad fact that all these rhymes were written on steel-hard rye. The first of the dozen pieces was a character of the Silver Tip bear (really a mythical beast), of which the most tooth-chattering yarns are told for the benefit of the tenderfoot. Such are his fighting qualities that he could be described (in lines that date themselves) as follows:

The Grizzly is a catch-weight b'ar
  When breaking up his game.
The Cinnamon, when his dander's riz,
  Is jest about the same.
The Black b'ar ain't no fightin' b'ar
  Except when he's a she.
But Silver Tip, though littlest far,
  C'ud whip them b'ars all three.

Fer the nature o' the Silver Tip
Is this—when hevin' fun,
He's Fitz and Corbett back to back,
An* three b'ars built in one !

The next lay in this Miner's Scrip was concerned with the " Whisky-Jack," the quaint little bottle-bodied bird of the jay tribe, which haunts the habitations of men throughout the West, and is as friendly as the robin and " a durn' sight more impident." The miner, imprisoned in the snows for a whole winter, is thankful for the bird's cheery, cheeky companionship, and rejoices when the life of a lonesome land is mystically reduplicated at the sudden, swift advent of spring, which he finds :

Ez good ez a jag, for where I'd view
One critter if earth, I now sees two,
An' Whisky-Jack on the tent-door sill,
Has brought along his Whisky-Jill.

Later on I made a woeful warning ballad of a miner who was curiously convicted of stealing food on the Klondike route over White Pass :

Now when a villyun steals our life, in other words our grub.
We use no down-east etiquette in dealin' with that scrub.

He had no sugar in his pack, but there was sugar at the bottom of his pannikin when a party paid him a surprise visit at supper-time. Two men tasted of the sweetening, since two witnesses are legally required (as miners think) to secure a conviction. Then " Bill a ter'ble thoughtful man," produced a rope, and :

We hitched him in, and swung him up, and left him dancin' free
Upon a lonesome standin' spruce, fer other thieves to see.
There's a shadder in the moonlight movin' slowly to and fro,
An' the shadder o' that shadder loafs along the trodden snow.

In lighter vein was the story of the miner who taught his dog Waggo to recognize the scent of gold, even when it occurred in deeply buried " ancient channels" (that's the place for the coarse stuff!), and thereby saved himself the bother of sinking prospect shafts. Having made his pile, he returned to the " old farm" in Wisconsin :

> Where from babe to boy I so often felt:
> Fust mother's slipper ; then father's belt.
> But gone, alas ! was the country's charm,
> I struck a saloon where I left a farm ;
> And where father saved his roots in holes,
> They had built a church an' was savin' souls.

Late one night, when he and his dog were leaving the saloon for home, the dog uttered a yelp and began following up the scent of gold—to the disgust of his owner, who thought how foolish he had been to go prospecting in the Klondyke when there was gold all the time under his native soil. Finally the dog n his quarry to earth behind a wood-pile; it was the minister of the new church, who made a clean breast of it:

> When you cried " more gold," it made me think
> You knew how I fought the cursed drink,
> And how, last fall, when my labours ceased,
> I took the Gold Cure way down East.

Last of the dozen was a story of a " scrapping-hitch " or general all-round fight at a dance hall in Dawson City, belonging to one Possen. The affair started with a dispute between two miners, Jukes and Billups, over the favours of Miss Virginia Brown, the only lady present. When the twain began scrapping :

Next wink o' time we saw them hug ;
And ez they struck the ground,
Each pot and bottle, jar an' jug,
Jingled and jigged around.
Yea, solemn bar'ls o' solid truck
In corners stowed away,
Was seen to hop an' heard to chuck-
'Le like as they felt gay.

The spectators began to bet on the fight, and, disagreeing as to the odds, quarrelled and fought among themselves. The eyewitness was knocked out, and compelled to retreat, being a small, meek man, and the last he saw of it was Miss Virginia laughing as man by man went down :

When man is found out breakin' laws,
Nine times in ten woman's the cause,
As 'twas in Eden, so in Dawson City,
Where gals is also scarce ! A pity !

That's as much as I remember of the Miner's Scrip, and perhaps it would have been better to have forgotten it all.

XV

THE CUCKOO PUZZLE

IT is not till the wandering voice of the cuckoo is heard, telling his name to all the little hills and spinneys, that we really believe the spring has arrived.

Poets have waxed eloquent over his oft-repeated call, which is apt to be as frequent and urgent in the midst of torrents of rain as on a quiet mid-April morning, when the sun seems still half-asleep. I have heard it at intervals through a tremendous storm when the thunder rolled from mountain to mountain, and all the song-birds were silent. I did not then know what I know now—that courtship is such a highly competitive business for the male cuckoo that he would get left if he stopped his wooing for a moment.

Old Daddy Wordsworth was better acquainted with the domestic habits of the bird than most of the modern spring poets. W. E. Henley, who never forgave him for writing " The Excursion " once compared Wordsworth with an old donkey looking over a gate, moving his head first to the right then to the left and so on for the rest of the afternoon. But looking over gates, after all, is the only way of getting an expert knowledge of the private affairs of beasts and birds. So Wordsworth knew enough about the cuckoo's imperfect domesticity, to declare that it was a " mystery," the full explanation of which was not to be found in the text-books of natural history. But I

have always been convinced that Shakespeare had far more information on this subject than any of the modern nature-poets. He must have seen a great deal of bird-life when he went out poaching in the days of his youth in a country-side which accommodates more cuckoos to the square acre than any other part of England. And when he wrote of the cuckoo's call as " unfriendly to a married ear," I feel sure he had in his mind the real secret of the cuckoo's unsatisfactory existence.

He must have known that the unfortunate male cuckoo's inevitable fate is to resemble the hapless husbands who have to introduce the names of two or three co-respondents into their pleas for a divorce. The male cuckoo has to share his mate with as many as five pertinacious rivals. Hence all the odd arrangements which have rendered the life of cuckoos the worst scandal in natural history—as bad as any of the odious facts revealed to the late Henri Fabre, the famous French Entomologist, in the course of his lifelong study of the domestic affairs of insects.

Let us follow this queer drama of social consequences in the air to its logical conclusion. We begin with the curious fact that there are at least four male cuckoos to every female. Why it should be so, how it came about, is a puzzle which no scientist has ever yet succeeded in explaining.

Four males to every female! The first result is that all the courting has to be done by the male bird ; the female has not even troubled to acquire a few notes of love-song, to express her joy in mutual passion and possession. She merely emits, when anxious to be squired, a curious little bubbling chuckle—as who should say : " Hurry up, fools ! See who'll get here first."

And they do hurry up, flocking round her in great perturbation of spirit. All day they have been loafing about in the green, henless, glades, incessantly uttering the love-call which after a time bores me as much as the repetition of " ooky-snookums " did the neighbours in the music-hall song. There are times in spring-time when it would give me the keenest pleasure if only the cuckoo would " oo " before it " cuck "-ed. When, however, the male is in view of his lady-love (not that she's a real lady !) he lengthens his love-call to " Cuck-cuck-oo," prefacing it often with a rather bad imitation of her provoking chuckle—an imitation rather well described by a Scottish naturalist as like " the noise that would be made by a person with a rasping cough, trying not to laugh, without much success."

Now is it to be expected that a female so much sought after would bother about nest-building and rearing a family ? Does the spoilt darling of society give much thought to the making of a home and the responsibilities of motherhood ? With nearly all English birds nest-building is a co-operative task for the newly-wedded couple ; it is, in fact, the pleasant preoccupation of the honeymoon. It is " getting together a home " in several thousand pieces. The male bird willingly helps when he is the sole possessor of his dainty mate—not, like the male cuckoo, merely one of a number of part-owners, each of which has not a wife but a share in a mistress. What happens in a parallel case in human life ? Birds are the most human of all living creatures, I think ; more human, often, than human beings.

So the hen cuckoo does not trouble about providing a nest for her offspring (whose are they, anyway ?) but dumps each egg into somebody else's nest. If she finds a vacant newly-built nest she will lay it there.

Otherwise she deposits it on the ground, afterwards carrying it in her beak to a nest already containing eggs. The mothering instinct has thus dwindled to a provision which reminds one of the way in which all the children of Rousseau, that revolutionary expert in public virtues and private vices, were promptly deposited in the basket of a Foundling Hospital. She almost always takes the precaution of depositing her egg, which is very small for a bird of her size, among eggs resembling it in colour and markings. Hedge-sparrows, pied wagtails, tit-larks, tree-pipits, robins, and reed wrens are for that reason the foster-parents usually chosen.

The manner, in which the infant cuckoo forcibly ejects the other younglings is well authenticated. It is only natural in the heir to the hideous selfishness of its parents, who, having shuffled off their parental responsibilities, clear out for their Continental tour long before any other migratory birds. It is pride in the size and strength of what seems their own off-spring—I could never find enough sense of arithmetic in birds to believe they could detect the fraud by counting eggs—which causes the foster-parents to care for the invader. On several occasions I have seen a cuckoo mobbed by small birds, and it would be pleasant to think *it* was done as a protest on the part of decent bird-society against a disgusting anti-social parasite. But the probability is that they mistake the cuckoo for a hawk.

Many other birds occasionally evade the duties of domesticity. American Cowbirds are rather frequent offenders. The American Black-billed Cuckoo is parasitic only in the Northern regions, where, for some unexplained reason, the male birds are in a two-to-one or three-to-one majority. In the South there is no

majority of males. But only the cuckoo we know offends systematically.

Yet street-bred poets still wax eloquent about the cuckoo-song, and I know of a Conscientious Objector, who eventually joined up and fought like a man (winning a D.C.M), because he " couldn't stick listening to the cuckoo all day and doing nothing for the country."

There are cuckoo-folk in all human communities. One example is the American woman whose score of divorces sometimes runs into double figures. Another is the Bolshevik who lays revolutionary ideas in Trade Union nests. A third is the literary critic who " specializes " in some famous dead-and-gone poet. And there are others.

XVI

HUMOURS OF INDEXING

THERE is no greater literary sin than the omission of an Index, and, if I had my way, even novels would be provided with charts of this kind to their multifarious contents—how convenient it would be for readers, as well as reviewers, to have such a handy means of checking the emotions of Miss May Sinclair's quick-change heroines and the involved relationships, business and otherwise, of Mr. Galsworthy's Forsytes, who increase in number and variety with each successive instalment of his epic of property! Yes, I hope to live to see the day when a novel without an index will be as shrewdly condemned as I am, when, in an ever-recurring discomfortable dream, I go out to dinner without socks and shoes ! This is not an original aspiration. Samuel Johnson was very anxious that Richardson should produce an index to his novels, on the lines of the indexes of sentiments and opinions, as distinguished from facts, which were not uncommon in the eighteenth century, being, as a rule, made by the author himself. " I wish you would add an *index return"* wrote the great Lexicographer, who had none of our modern contempt for the humblest appliances of exact scholarship, " that when the reader recollects any incident, he may easily find it, which at present he cannot do, unless he knows in which volume it is to be found; for ' Clarissa' is not a performance to be read with eagerness and laid

aside for ever, but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious; and, therefore, I beg that this edition, by which I suppose posterity is to abide, may want nothing than can facilitate its use." Richardson was complaisant enough to act on his friend's hint and in 1755 appeared a volume of 410 pages, entitled " A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections contained " in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison, digested under proper heads."

Having lately suffered from biographies which have no index, I can heartily say " Amen ! " to all the maledictions that have been launched against the indexless book. It has been said that " the omission of an index, when essential, should be an indictable offence." Amen ! Learned lawyers, both British and American, have proposed that any author who published a book without an index should be deprived of the benefits of the Copyright Acts. Amen ! But we owe to Baynes, the author of the " Archaeological Epistle to Dean Mills," a form of cursing which measures up to the hideousness of the crime in question. " Sir," said the learned Francis Dance to Mr. Thorns who urged the formation of an Index Society, " my friend, John Baynes, used to say that the man who published a book without an Index ought to be damned ten miles beyond Hell, where the Devil could not get for stinging nettles." Ah, my brother-reviewers, these be words which furnish a safety valve for righteous indignation, and prevent it from turning into something worse than suppressed gout! A seven-fold Amen to them, though I should refuse to sing it to Stainer's treacly music.

For the honest, well-made index no praise can be exaggerated, and I hope, hoping for the best while

fearing the worst, that the index-maker is better rewarded for his self-sacrificial toil than was the companion of Curll's writer of a Church History *(see* Swift's instructions to a porter how to find that bookseller's authors)—" the gentleman who lies by him in the flock bed, my index-maker "—and the " index-makers in ragged coats of frieze " mentioned by Macaulay as the very lowest of the frequenters of coffee-houses in the era of Swift and Dryden. Macaulay, though next to the Devil the worst Whig that ever happened, had the redeeming virtue of a respect for index-makers. And though the author of it was a Jew, and not pleasing to a " goy " like myself (by the way " goy " must be the original of the American " guy "—equivalent to our " bloke " or " chap "), yet Isaac Disraeli's praise of the inventor of indexes is worthy of quotation in any Christian Volume: " I for my part venerate the inventor of indexes; and I know not to whom to yield the preference, either to Hippocrates, who was the great anatomizer of the human body, or to that unknown labourer in literature who first laid open the nerves and arteries of a book." If I may be allowed to say so—Selah !

An index may be made a thing of literature. The indexes to the " Tatler " and the " Spectator " have that admirable quality of persuading one to read the book itself. As Leigh Hunt observed on this very subject: " As there is a soul of goodness in things evil, so there is a soul of humour in things dry, and in things dry by profession. Lawyers know this, as well as index-makers, or they would die of sheer thirst and aridity. But as grapes, ready to burst with wine, issue out of the most stony places, like jolly fellows bringing Burgundy out of a cellar, so an index like the " Tatler's" often gives us a taste of the

quintessence of his humour." Here are specimen entries from the original indexes of the " Tatler " and the " Spectator " :

i. " Love letters before and after marriage, found in a grave/'

" News, Old People die in France."

" Maids of Honour, their allowance of beef for breakfast in Queen Elizabeth's time/'

2. " Gentry of England, generally speaking in debt."

" Women, the English excel all other nations in beauty."

„ Signs of their improvement under the ' Spectator's ' hands."

" Their pains in all ages to adorn the outside of their heads."

Of modern examples of the humorous index that added by Lowell to the " Biglow Papers " is the most famous example, from which may be quoted :

Caesar, a tribute to. His *Vent vidi vici* censured for undue prolixity.

Ulysses, husband of Penelope. Borrows money. (For full particulars see " Homer " and " Dante.")

Bible, not composed for use of coloured persons.

A careful inspection of some thirty indexes to works recently published has not revealed a scrap of humour of this kind, either incidental or accidental. The modern index-maker does not seize the chance of getting even with the author whose book has bored him, or jarred him in his finger political feelings. Macaulay knew that the indexer had considerable power for mischief, if he chose to use it, for he can state in a few words what the author has veiled in verbage, and so arrange his material as to turn an author's words against himself. Knowing this, he wrote to his publishers : " Let no d——d Tory make the index

to my History." Indeed, there is evidence for believing that a satirical index cleverly designed to show up the fatuous nature of the reflections contained in a travel book written in his young days, once caused a politician to lose the Speakership of the House of Commons. Oh, that mine enemy would write a book and allow me to compile the index ! I would so arrange that nobody would be able to look at the craft for laughing at the absurd banner flaunting at its stern. Let nothing in this dissertation lead anybody to imagine that I despise the art of indexing. The ideal indexer, like the poet, is born, and made ; he is often largely responsible for the success of an informative work.

XVII

NEW CARD-GAMES

AT the present moment we are all looking for new card-game to take the place of bridge and its numerous offspring. It may seem absurd to suggest that the supremacy of the game which was described as *pons asinorum* by a famous whist-player (as shall be shown, there was a grain of philosophic truth in his description) is as yet seriously threatened. The popularity of the various forms of auction bridge appears at first sight a crushing answer to my contention. Yet for anybody who has studied the history of such indoor diversions there are signs on every side that the great bridge family has seen its best days. Let us consider one or two historical object lessons. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the fame of Philidor reached its climax, chess was for a time a fashionable game. The list of subscribers to the famous club at Parsloe's included the names of Fox, Rockingham, Mansfield, Erskine, and many other celebrities, and even the " nut " of that period, though he really preferred cards, owned a board and set of chess-men and was at any rate acquainted with the moves of the pieces. For a moment it seemed that the long-descended " Game of Kings " was to regain the position it held throughout the Middle Ages, when it was played in every mediaeval castle, evening after evening—how else could the dreary hours between dinner-time and bedtime have

been persuaded to take to themselves the wings, if not of a bird, at any rate of a bat flickering to and fro in the darkness of the raftered roof! But the social circle at Parsloe's was soon broken up—for the simple and sufficient reason that chess, as developed by the Philidorian analysis, was too strenuous and scientific a business for fashionable persons. So Fox and the rest all went back to the card-room whence they had been drawn by curiosity and a laudable desire to honour genius in any form. Whenever a card-game, or, for that matter, any indoor diversion, becomes too serious and scientific for the average mind it soon ceases to be fashionable. Whenever the professional cuts in, the man-of-the-world cuts off—to seek some new diversion which does not require its votaries to study a shelf-full of text-books. Whist, to take another and more appropriate example, was in its day the universal card game. But whist was developed scientifically by two generations of analysts until it could be justly said that "the real game begins where Cavendish leaves off," and so it was left as a recreation for abysmal old gentlemen and the old-young persons called steeple-brows by irreverent Yankees. Of late years, however, both chess and whist have been revived as truly democratic pastimes. Business men, lawyers, and doctors, and parsons, journalists, and the hodsmen of literature, all sorts and conditions of mechanical brain-workers, find in chess a release from the monotony of everyday life and a means of purging and purifying the mind from soul-corroding worry. The imagery of this "Game of Kings" gives the artist that is latent in so many harassed bread-winners a chance of living and an other-worldly sphere to live in. In lower strata of society the weekly "Whist-drive" (I have seen as many as

four hundred players, men and women, young and old, at one of these popular affairs) performs the same function as the chess club. These immortal games no longer require the patronage of Society (with a big " S ") to keep them alive and prosperous. Fashionable pastimes come and go, but they go on for ever.

The sudden and surprising popularity of bridge, whist's youngest and most alluring daughter, is easily explained. Everybody was acquainted with the elementary principles of whist, But very few of the younger folk cared to face the long and laborious task of training the mind to remember what cards were out and to deduce from the play the probable whereabouts of those left in hand, and to get by heart the innumerable rules which represent the results of a scientific application of the mathematical theory of probabilities to as many emergencies. Bridge, by exposing one of the four hands, greatly relieved the tax on a player's memory and faculty of deduction and at the same time gave one a chance of getting up to stretch one's legs—and one's tongue. The new system of scoring was also a pleasant innovation, seeing that *it* involved a much brisker circulation of currency. But the great point was that the " new whist " (as it was originally called) disestablished the old whist-player, whose body of memorized tactics was useless at the bridge-table. To that extent bridge was a *pons asinorum,* a road of safe retreat from the citadel of whist lore over the abysmal gulf of scientific theory into a sunnier and more bracing clime where young and old, expert and tyro, were once more on terms of equality. A certain brisk old gentleman complained to me that bridge had killed the art of conversation—whereat I secretly rejoiced, having in the days of my youth suffered horribly from the professional conver-

sationalist. I told him that he had no right to complain as long as use and custom insisted that he should sit at dinner with a lady on the left and another on the right, neither of whom could escape his epigrams. But, a little later on, I found to my dismay that bridge was destroying the art of flirtation, and not being then " too middle-aged for poetry " I expressed my sorrow in the following copy of verses :

Time was when Delia's voice
Made every swain rejoice ;
She talked of many things,
And all her words had wings.

On wings of rainbow sound
Her fancies fluttered round ;
In gossip's far-flung snare
We caught them everywhere.

Ah mc ! the weary change !
No more her fancies range ;
Like to a lute unstrung
Is Delia's dulcet tongue.

In a land of painted lies
She sells her voice and eyes,
And all her rose-white spring
To a smug-faced pasteboard King.

For a wage of tinkling pelf
She hires her future self,
And all that she has been
To a smirking pasteboard Queen.

I' the cards I read her fate
(She goes to bed so late)—
She'll share her youthful grave
With a grinning pasteboard Knave.

The modern girl is incapable of such devotion to

bridge or any of its variants. You will find her in the billiard-room, which is no longer a species of unisexual wilderness, as often as in the place where the card tables are set forth. Study the faces of the players and you will readily understand why she is not on in that scene. How keen and concentrated is their gaze, how anxious their deliberations, how abstruse their methods ! Bridge has become too serious and scientific for the youth and beauty of the triumphant 'Twenties. A new card-game is urgently required.

But what is it to be ? " Search me," as the Americans say. There have been several candidates for Fashion's favour in the tiny field of green cloth. There was Kuhn-Kahn, for example, which was an inoffensive round-game, *in* spite of the fact that it possessed a name that was too much for one's spelling powers. It seems to me that sitting round a tall hat and 'planing cards into it would be a more exhilarating diversion. Manx was a much more interesting game. It can be played by any number of players up to six or seven, and it does not necessitate the much-abused system of partners—you merely sit next to your affinity. It may be briefly defined as the offspring of a marriage between bridge and poker ; one of those Anglo-American alliances in fact, which have already done so much for the pacification of our planet and the propagation of practical eugenics. Luck counts for a deal in Manx, but there is ample scope for calculation and finesse. But has *it* caught on ? The authorities I have consulted shake their heads in answer to that question. . . . What I should like to see is the appearance of a new game to be played with a complete pack of Tarots. Then, in the intervals of playing for points according to some new dispensation, everybody could tell everybody else's fortune in the fine traditional

style. Fortune-telling is supposed to be possible with an ordinary pack of playing-cards ; most of us have crossed the gipsy's palm with a piece of silver (" grease my dook " were the actual words of the last Egyptian who read my fate by the cards) in order that our planets might be rightly ruled. But the fine art of *Cartotnancie,* which is well worth recovering, requires the traditional pack of seventy-eight Tarots, fifty-six bearing pips—Swords, Staves, Money, and Cups—and twenty-two Atouts or symbolical picture cards. No other form of divination by means of cards is worth a pennypiece even if the result happens to fulfil all your secret aspirations. I should like to see a small club formed for the study and interpretation of the Tarot tradition. It would even be possible to *get* a suitable pack printed and published—the pictures in Mrs. Rensselaer's book[1] could be reproduced—for the use of the public at large. At present a correct Tarot pack is hard to come by. The next step would be to invent some suitable game for gambling purposes, which would at the same time serve as an introduction to the prophetical usages of the pack.

Here let us look into the fuller history of card and board games. Of late years the whole of this difficult and obscure subject has been illuminated by the speculations of Mr. Stewart Culin, who sees in all these pastimes the survival of magical processes adopted in order to classify, according to the four directions, objects and events which did not of themselves reveal their proper classification. Dice represent one of the implements employed by civilized magicians for this purpose. Mr. Culin has even attempted to bring *Chaturanga,* the original form of chess, which first

[1] " Prophetical, Educational, and Playing Cards." By Mrs. John King van Rensselaer. Hurst & Blackett.

appeared in India thirteen centuries ago, into his surprising synthesis. But Mr. H. J. R. Murray, the latest and most learned of chess historians, will have nothing to do with his theory of the earliest evolution of chess. As he points out, there is not enough evidence to warrant it. But Mr. Culm's new method of interpretation is most effectual in explaining the origin of the Tarot pack, from which it is certain the ordinary pack was derived. It enables us to suggest probable answers to the questions asked in an ancient invective against cards called " II Traditor " (1550) as to the significance of the Atouts !

What is the meaning of the female Pope (Papessa),
Of the Chariot and the Traitor,
Of the Wheel, the Fool, the Star, the Sun,
Of the Moon, and Strength, and Death,
And Hell, and all the rest
Of these strange cards ?

Briefly, the explanation is as follows. In the earliest stage of the art of ascertaining a man's fate a bundle of arrows or sticks was cast down on an altar in the midst of the statues of gods and goddesses. The positions of the arrows or sticks in the fallen heap (one pointing towards one diety and another to another) provided a system of clues to the inquirer's future. It was the business of the priest-magician to interpret these connected signs, and he and his consulting deities were duly rewarded. In course of time mural paintings were substituted for the sightless statues—and, later on, came a still more startling change when the whole chamber of divination, paintings on the walls and central altar and the bundle of arrows resting on it, turned into a pack of cards like the King's Court of Inquiry in Lewis Carroll's sym-

bolical story. The pictures that had descended from the dissolving walls dwindled into the Atouts; the arrows or sticks became pip-cards, the four suits representing the various attributes of that enigmatic personage, a mediator between gods and men, known to the Greeks as Hermes. Of course, the Culin theory is not worked out on such clear-cut lines as the foregoing description suggests—I have taken, in point of fact, the explanation of the ingenious, but rather discredited, Count de Gebelin as the basis of my picture of the origin of that which he describes as " the strange collection of unbound leaves that are the parents of all modern playing-cards." It is impossible to demonstrate the truth of the theory which derives card-games from lost processes of divination. But its value as a scientific " working hypothesis " is not easily overrated. Indeed, it has revolutionized the study of this and many allied subjects.

The evidence for accepting de Gebelin's theory that the pack of Tarots is " the Book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus" is absolutely inadequate. None the less, the Tarots are unquestionably the instruments of a process of divination, which has its roots in the theology of the pre-Christian world and actually survives, in a debased and corrupt form, in such methods of fortune-telling by the cards as were practised by Etteila, who certainly succeeded in satisfying his clients. Here is a brief account of the method of consulting the Tarots adopted by Etteila when a whole career was to be revealed, as well as the character and the influence of family, friends, enemies, etc. This form of consultation was supposed to be an exact equivalent of the young Egyptian's presentation in the temple, when, on reaching maturity, he made a solemn sacrifice,

and the tablets of Fate that had been inscribed at his birth were consulted—so that the wishes of the deity, which were to govern his career, might be ascertained. Shuffle all the Tarots without making any distinction between the Atouts and the pip-cards. Let the inquirer cut them three times, and then separate them into three packs of about equal size. Take the central heap, deal out twenty-six cards, and lay them to the right in a pile. Shuffle those remaining with the rest of the pack, and let them again be cut, and then again separated into three piles. Select the centre heap, and deal seventeen cards, placing them in a pile beside the one containing the twenty-six cards. Shuffle all the cards that remain, and by a process similar to that already twice carried out obtain a third pile of eleven dealt cards. The remaining twenty-four cards are collected and put aside ; they form the " widow " and stand for the events that might have happened in the inquirer's past life but for the intervention of chance or luck.

The first packet of twenty-six cards represents the soul of the inquirer and its vicissitudes, especially as conditioned by the influence of his relations and intimate friends. The second pack of seventeen gives the story of his mind and of the events that are to affect its development. And the pile of eleven cards concerns his bodily or material future—here information is to be sought as to his journeys, money affairs, etc. The cards are to be spread out on a table in three rows and interpreted according to their value and position in regard to one another. Papus is perhaps the best guide (though by no means trustworthy) to the values, etc., of the various Tarot cards.

An amateur expert who possesses a good set of Tarots (specially painted for her) and has made a

careful study of the traditional usages worked out my future the other day. It is an alluring game, and I should like to see it become popular. It might be defined as a species of psychic Patience. I am trying to forget all about the strange events and persons that are to have the making and marring of me during the next twenty years or so. All except the " dark lady " who is about to intervene in my career—I do not want to forget her ! Too much fuss has been made of the golden girls by Meredith and other men of letters ; she and I are destined, apparently, to revive the interest of novelists and the rest in the possibilities of dusk-haired heroines. She arrives a little late in the day does this Dark Lady. Nevertheless I shall not refuse to see her when her starry eyes and passion-pale brow emerge from a nocturnal obscurity. Hasten, hasten, Dark Lady!

XVIII

THE SPOOK'S PROGRESS

THOUGH it is of American origin, like chewing-gum and motor polo and other horrific inventions, the word " spook" strikes me as a grateful and comforting addition to the resources of Anglo-Saxon speech. " Ghost " smacks so of humanity that it is inapplicable to such incursions of the supernatural as phantom flowers or a spectral door; " bogle " though R. L. S. thought it worth any other six words you choose to name, is limited in its connotation to the phantasmal occurrences that are deliberately designed (or at any rate seem so) to make the observer's teeth chatter and his hair stand on end. But " spook " may be used of any uncanny phenomenon whatsoever, and what is more it is so uncannily unlike ordinary matter-of-fact words that its appearance on a printed page always produces the little shiver, slight and not necessarily unpleasant, which is appropriate to the occasion.

One of the latest London stories of the supernatural or subternatural presents a phantasmal door in the wall of a first-floor passage in a Georgian house (built *circa* 1790) on the right side of the Park. Visitors notice the door (which is always ajar) on the first morning of their stay, and afterwards are surprised to find it is not there. The tenant would like the owner to open up the blank space of wall to see if a room or stairway is hidden there, but this boon is

refused on the score of expense and also because every cubic foot of space in the house can be accounted for. This appearing and disappearing door cannot well be called a " ghost " or a " bogle," but the word " spook " is quite in order. It is also applicable to the phantom flowers described by Mr. J. C. Winslow, writing from St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, in a pre-war (1913) number of the " Spectator." Let us have his own account of these intriguing manifestations :

I am lately returned from a tour in Italy. On 10 April, at about 6 p.m., my sister and I went to see the well-known Protestant cemetery by the Pyramid of Cestius, at Rome, and, at a little distance above and to the left of the entrance, came to a grave, thickly covered with violet leaves, and bearing the name of (I think) one Elizabeth Wyckhoff.

As we stood over it we both noticed a delicious smell of violets, and, looking down, saw the flowers peeping out here and there from deep down among the leaves. The next moment we noticed, however, that there were no violets actually tangible, for as soon as one tried to fix one's gaze on one it had vanished, and was seen to be like an optical illusion.

Nevertheless, these phantom violets—quite clear and distinguishable—kept appearing in all parts of the grave, wherever we turned our eyes, for the space of three or four minutes, and long after we had grown quite critical about them ; and the smell persisted for the same period. Then gradually both the appearances and the scent faded away, and there was no trace of either (the leaves giving no smell), nor, when we revisited the spot before leaving, could we gain any experience either of the scent or of the flowers.

Neither my sister nor I could devise any hypothesis by way of explanation. We both seem to have shared exactly the same experience. The violets appeared only one at a time, but at first in rapid succession, and then later more sparsely. They had the exact appearance of the ordinary English violet, though, of course, shadowy and fleeting. We both saw them in the same nooks. Neither of us had been staring at anything which could have left an impression on the eye; and in any

case this would not account for the scent, which was quite as unmistakable as the appearance.

This story interests me for several reasons. In the first place the appearance of phantom flowers (which could be smelt as well as seen) on a grave is a common incident in the lives of saints and martyrs as narrated, with an infinity of detail, by the members of a Church which will have nothing *to* say to the Protestant idea of a close season for miracles. The witnesses of such signs and wonders were convinced that not merely in a manner of speaking did

> . . . the actions of the just
> Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust."

They had seen and smelt the other-worldly flowers in the place where the beauty of holiness was sepultured; they had even handled them, shredding the mystic petals with ecstatic joy. Their evidence withstood the legal tests (which are not sufficient for history, though Mr. Birrell thinks otherwise) when the Devil's advocate cross-examined them in the process for canonization. If Elizabeth Wyckhoff were not buried in a Protestant cemetery, the fleeting violets on her grave might help her harmless shade to win an official halo. I am surprised that Mr. Winslow did not make every effort to ascertain her name and story —the fact that he omitted to do so is one of the strangest touches in a strange story. A rationalistic explanation is easy enough to find. The violet leaves at a time of the year when Rome is full of spring flowers, would suggest the presence of violets, and out of that suggestion, in a spot where the mind is exalted by a sense of loftier issues, and the sense subjected to finer usages, the whole illusion might grow up and

blossom abundantly for a few moments. The scent of the mystical violets preceded their appearance ; so that they might be compared with the small girl who had been allowed to rub a sprig of lavender on her hanky, and, advancing in the midst of her mother's five o'clock guests, remarked in loud and exultant tones : " I f you 'mell a 'mell, it's me ! " [As a rule the magic of suggestion is no more than a kind of conceptual conjuring issuing in such merely verbal adventures as that of the old lady who was asked to explain the expression " Argentine tango," and replied at once, " It's one of those nasty Stock Exchange dances, my dear." But the principle at work is the same, no doubt.] If Mr. Winslow's sister was wearing some perfume (most women do nowadays), the rationalist would think his chain of causation complete. It is very easy to mistake one scent for another under the compulsion of some over-ruling idea; in point of psychological fact the mind's nose is more easily deceived than the mind's eye. One day last spring I thought I was inhaling the fragrance of red May, but it soon turned out to be something very different—a vervain exhalation which was the artificial *aura* of another's present personality. The tree also was familiarly at hand, but all its wealth of blossom had perished a week before.

But these rationalistic explanations are never really satisfactory; they remind me of the bogus scientific experiments mentioned in " Love and Mr. Lewisham," to my mind the most delightful of Mr. H. G. Wells's novels. I prefer to think of " the delicious smell of violets" mentioned by Mr. J. C. Winslow (of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury) as a pleasant and perplexing spook of the progessive species. The phantom perfume is by no means infrequent in modern

literature. The late Marcel Schwob, the greatest French master of the " unco' " in his day, had tooth-chattering ideas about it (he did not live long enough to express them in short stories), and there is an excellent example of its possibilities in a terrifying little tale by Ambrose Bierce, in which the protagonist follows a smell of piercing sweetness through the high-columned dusk of a forest—till he at last comes to the tree on which his deadliest enemy has hanged himself !

The title of this dissertation is justified when one considers the superior subtlety of these and other popular spooks in comparison with the crudeness of those which affrighted our rude forefathers. Like everything and everybody else, the spook has had to move with the times ; his progress of late years closely resembles that of the music-hall conjurer who has had to make use of every new scientific invention and psychological discovery *in* order *to* keep pace with the ever-increasing intelligence of a fastidious public. It is not enough for the artist in whitewashed magic to be an Houdin nowadays ; he must rise to the height of Mr. Devant's bewildering artistry or find it more and more difficult to get engagements. The spook has had to face the self-same problem ; well it knows that the manifestations which were a nine days' wonder fifty years ago would not earn the smallest paragraph in a provincial paper in these latter days. The lachrymose lady in a winding-sheet, the cowled monk carrying his head *upside down* (a good bit of business when first invented !) in the crook in his arm, the whimpering babe pattering about on small, wet feet, the banshee with her pale, freckled face and ululations on the upper C, the beast-man escaped from the family hiding-place, even the gliding horror, with a countenance as softly creased and featureless as the

palm of your hand (an Irish spook of the Famine time) —one and all of these prodigies are so played out that no estate agent, anxious to gather in a few of those easy-going American dollars for a client, would think of including any of them among the distractions of a desirable residence. A few weeks ago I bought a parcel of spookish literature from a country bookseller and went through it all on a stormy night, when everybody else in the house was asleep. The parcel contained a variety of old-fashioned ghost stories, some of them admirably stage-managed, but I could not squeeze out a single complimentary shudder, even when the wind suddenly dropped and a soft rainfall began to touch the window-pane with long, delicate fingers, and the furniture creaked spasmodically, and the " old Moon's sigh " was distinctly audible. No amount of scenery can make the old-fashioned personal spook impressive; a sailorman, by virtue of his vocation the most superstitious of mortals, would have laughed to scorn those antique tales of personally haunted houses and suddenly populated graveyards.

An appropriate anecdote came to me in the winter from a village in the Welsh borderland, where " farises" (pronounced almost like " Pharisees ") are still seen dancing under foxgloves. A cottage there was supposed to be haunted by a former tenant, who had committed suicide, and a widow with two tiny children offered to take it. A friend told her of the cottage's queer reputation. " Old Pilley's seen standing in his corner, looking terrible tall and opening and shutting his eyes." But the widow was all the more ready to rent the cottage ; she thought old Pilley would amuse the baby and keep him quiet when she was busy out of doors. Thus it will be seen that, even among simple country folk, whose lives have loopholes into

the Celtic Wonderland, the ghost or *personal* spook is no longer respected. And I suppose that such specimens as could not cease pretending to be " he " or " she," so as to conform with twentieth-century requirements, must either have fallen into unemployment or attached themselves to the various practitioners of spiritualism.

But, as Mr. Winslow's story and many others of the same description lead me to believe, the average spook has moved with the times, and reaped the reward of a progressive adaptability. He or she has wisely relapsed into impersonality and become a phantom odour, a disappearing door, a noise that comes and goes, a coin that cannot anyhow be picked up, a teddy bear that vanishes the moment you take your eyes off it, a feeling of hairy flesh brushing against you in the dark, a sudden and inexplicable knock-out blow struck when only the recipient is in the room, a cannon-ball of vast dimensions self-propelled across a lawn—anything and everything that will amaze a generation that could not, if it would, be haunted in the old-fashioned sense of the term.

As it happens, I had lived in a far-off land where the spooks are numerous and enterprising beyond expectation, and strange stories of their doings were told over many a watch-fire that will never be re-kindled. Of all lands, Western America was, and perhaps still is, the most prolific in spooks. If all phantasms are really emanations from man's creative consciousness, as some believe, it is easy to see why it should be so. The whole of that vast country-side where Nature still sets her ambuscades afield was formerly the Red Man's hunting grounds. And for him there was nothing in the universe, visible or invisible, animate or inanimate, which is not instinct with mystic influence;

a bird singing, a leaf fluttering, a falling dewdrop, or a stone that moves not, may have for him its message or its mandate. So that the manifestations of living unrealities and all the glamour of stocks and stones that were not what they seemed (or were not at all, perhaps) which troubled the white pioneer (himself half an Indian) might be defined as projections of the aboriginal race's narrow but intense spirituality into the sphere of natural phenomena. There is a great secret of the Western wilderness ; what it was I never *knew,* but I *felt* it at all times and in all places. The wise old pioneers knew that it often meant danger where danger ought not to be ; there was always a " live trap " not far away ; and you were never more likely to be caught in it than when a sense of security possessed your soul. Alternately, these viewless traps were thought of as a species of inanimate spooks.

Here follow a few specific instances : (i) An old long-haired Scotch half-caste, who lived lonesomely and farmed in the intervals of hunting and fishing, decided to dig a well in front of his house. It was a waste of time going down to the river (400 feet below) whenever he wanted to fill a camp-kettle. He was working at this long and laborious job one day when three pebbles were thrown at him from above. Each of them was a lump of glassy obsidian. He climbed up, but could not find anybody about. Next day he put them in his hip-pocket and went over to an Indian Reserve four miles away to ask a medicine-man the meaning of the omen. The pebbles had vanished when he got there, and the medicine-man advised him to kill a steer and throw its blood into the hole, which he did. The well then filled with water, and in the first bucketful hauled up he found the three pebbles. He offered the medicine-man half the carcase of the

steer by way of fee. But he asked for the pebbles instead and got them, for the farmer did not care to keep such " whimsical fellows " (his own phrase) in his house, though he thought they might have brought him luck. (2) A party of placer-miners were prospecting the Stewart River in the Yukon country three years after the discovery of the Klondike diggings. They camped one night in a gulch, at the top of which they found a dead man, dried to a mummy, seated on a tree which had fallen across. One of his leg-bones was broken, and they judged that his canoe had been wrecked and himself injured in the rapids a mile or so upstream. Behind the fallen tree on which the dead man sat attentive was a square-shaped hole, evidently the work of a man's hands. A dispute arose as to whether it was the beginning of a prospecting shaft or intended as a grave. Next morning, having decided that the dead man had whiled away his last hours by digging his grave, they went up with their spades to bury him decently. But there was no trace of the square-shaped hole to be found. (3) What became of the Lima Treasure ? According to a Pacific version of the familiar story the American lieutenant who stole it sailed into the Far North and buried the stuff on an island not so very far from Prince Rupert, the terminal port of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Afterwards the ship was wrecked, and only the bo'sun escaped, eventually reaching Singapore after many strange adventures. In the early 'sixties he was living in San Francisco, where he was looked upon as a harmless old half-witted shellback, nobody heeding his yarn of a great treasure to be recovered in the Far North—if only somebody would put up the money for an expedition. In the end a syndicate of crooks, who had made money out of dealing in Comstock

Shares, chartered a schooner for the quest, taking with them the ancient bos'n, who was to have one-third of the treasure for his services. The night they came to the island the syndicate decided that he ought to be content with a cook's mate's share ; the controversy which ensued seems to have been settled with the help of a hot gun-barrel and some string. During the landing the old fellow, having filled his pockets with ballast, dropped overboard out of the boat; leaving behind him a lock of grizzled hair at which a young seaman had clutched as he was sinking. The treasure could not be found, and what became of the schooner and her crew is immaterial. The young seaman kept the grizzled lock in his Bible (his father was a New Englander), but afterwards threw it away in the hopes of bettering his luck. The blood on it had blotted a page, which he tore out—to find that it was there, blot and all, six years later when he again examined the book. As an old man, who had found " coarse dust " in Alaska and invested some of it in a prairie-farm, he often showed me that Bible, and the stained page which, so he asserted, could not be got rid of. My offer to tear it out was taken as tantamount to telling him he was a liar. Candidly, I don't think he was. These are three specimen spooks from the West. They are fairly progressive, are they not ?

XIX

DRUMMOND AND HIS HABITANTS

WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND, as Mr. Neil Munro reminds us in the appreciation which so happily introduces the definite edition of his poems,[1] holds a place apart among the singers and makers of this Empire in becoming. Alone among the laureates of the greater shires he never " sees red," never mingles sweat and blood to make his *purpurei panni,* never utters the strident, even brutal, note which is so often heard in the manly-adventurous verse of Kipling and Maselield and their innumerable imitators. As a poet he is as mild, if not as mellifluous, as Dr. Bridges ; though he delighted in living dangerously and was never so happy as when he could escape from civilization and vanish in the Quebec hinterland, loving as he did :

> The silent forest and the birches' flight
> Down the white peril of the rapids' rush,
> And the cold glamour of the Northern night

better than all the pageantry of historic cities and occasions, even Nature seemed to him not less merciful than majestical. He loved his fellow-mortals too well not to avert his gaze from the spectacle of their deadlier passions, and he included in his working definition of TO *piapov* all the tragical consequences thereof—so

"[1] The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond, with an introduction by Louis Frechette and an appreciation by Neil Munro." G. P. Putnam's Sons.

that the French-Canadian *habitant* or peasant-farmer of his poems in dialect lacks even the dourness of the transplanted Norman, to say nothing of the callousness to another's pain (most frequently shown in cruelty to animals) which is a result, no doubt, of a reversion in some measure to the Northman type. Only the sunlit side of French-Canadian character is revealed in his poems ; all that remains hidden in the shadow is left as matter for that Crabbe-like explorer of the Laurentian country-side who is yet to come. [When he does come he will find the Drummond convention a stumbling-block in his road to recognition.] None the less, there is much pleasure and not a little profit to be gained in contemplating the creations of Drummond's inexhaustible loving-kindness. All humanity loves a lover of humanity ; there is the secret, no doubt, of Drummond's easy conquest of the hearts of English-speaking readers on either side of the Atlantic. He is buried on the side of Mount Royal, and his gravestone bears these three lines of Moira O'Neill's :

> Youth's for an hour
> Beauty's a flower,
> But love is the jewel that wins the world.

As physician and poet, he earned this epitaph twice over; and who dare think the less of him because he knew not the finer usages of hate, and was incapable (except when he heard of some so-called sportsman who killed for killing's sake) of that *saeva indignatio* which is a fan of purifying flames in the hands of a Dante or a Shakespeare !

Both in his works and in his days he served his fellow-creatures wisely and well. Poetry was with him a side-issue ; he never allowed it to interfere with

the duties of a medical practice among poor people. When two calls came simultaneously, one from a wealthy man, and the other from a poor carter whose fee would not have exceeded that often paid to " Ole Docteur Fiset " (one of his truest types), namely,

> De prayer of poor man an' wan bag of oat,

he chose to attend the latter first, saying, " The rich can get any number of doctors, but poor Pat has only got me." But he would never have neglected even his richest patient in order to attend to a case of poetical midwifery, the bringing to birth of some inspired conception—indeed, I have been told he pooh-poohed the professional poet's theory of inspiration, its immediacy and its evanescence ! But he could never be made to understand that his mere presence was a kind of cordial, more effectual than the tonics prescribed by other doctors. " Many of his patients," says Mrs. Drummond in the touching memoir prefixed to a posthumous book, " declared that just to see Dr. Drummond did them good, and grumbled at the scarcity of his visits, but he, never dreaming that he had anything other than a prescription to bestow, said : ' What's the use of paying professional visits to people for whom I can do nothing more ? I might just as well steal the money out of their pockets.' On the other hand, if the case was a serious one it absorbed him, and his attention to it was unremitting. At such times he was with difficulty persuaded to take proper rest or food, and would often leave the dinner-table to search his book-shelves for yet another authority on the disease he was fighting ; then he would return with the book to the table, and if it contained what he sought his plate would be pushed aside, and in

spite of remonstrances from the rest of us he was off and away to his ' case ' once more." For some years he occupied the Chair of Medical Jurisprudence in McGill University, and he was a painstaking and successful teacher, winning the affectionate regard and confidence of his pupils and fellow-professors. Even when Louis Frechette, then the outstanding figure in French-Canadian letters, had passed on to him the title of " pathfinder of a new land of song " which he himself had received from Longfellow and " *habitant* Drummond " was as much talked of in London and Boston as in Montreal and Toronto, he was still at the beck and call of a host of unprofitable patients, cheerily living the Canadian country doctor's discomfortable life whereof he sings and says :

Dere's wan man got hees han' full t'roo ev'ry kin' of wedder,
An' he's never sure of not'ing but work an' work away—
Dat's de man dey call de doctor, w'en you ketch heem on de
contree
An' he's only man I know-me, don't got no holiday.

The making of poetry was for him but one among several diversions of his scant leisure ; I have no doubt whatever that he preferred fishing and shooting and gossiping over a camp-fire to what he would call " word-fighting " in self-chaffing moments. No man ever looked less like a poet; his mass and momentum and method of carrying himself suggested the weight-putter or hammer-thrower of Irish ancestry who wins Olympic medals for the American team. Indeed, he was a fine all-round athlete in the days of his youth, and even at the age of fifty he could have given any " strong writer " you choose to name the father and mother of a beating.

His first poems were made for the amusement of his friends, who were allowed to take copies of them. They were intended for after-dinner recitations, and such obviously humorous pieces as "The Wreck of the 'Julie Plante'" and "Mon Choual 'Castor'" were known to thousands in Canada and the United States long before the manuscript of his first and most famous volume was sent to a New York firm of publishers. He thought little or nothing of these two popular successes, but the fact that the very class of men depicted therein laughed over them till they cried and got them by heart was surely proof that he had opened some occluded spring of French-Canadian humour. I find the first-named piece almost as mirth-provoking as anything of C. G. Leland's, though, to be sure, the boisterous current of Hans Breitmann's muddy English, in which German polysyllables bob along like beer-kegs, is less easily resisted than the laughing rivulets of the *habitant's* dialect. The famous shipwreck on Lac St. Pierre reminds one of the ballad, familiar to sailormen, in which a canal-boat goes down with all hands in a melodramatic storm, despite the engineer's reply from the bank that "the ha'arse was doing his best." Here are two specimen stanzas :

De captinne walk on de fronte deck,
An' walk de hin' deck, too—
He call de crew from up de hole,
He call de cook also.
De cook she's name was Rosie,
She come from Montreal,
Was chambre maid on lumber barge
On de Grande Lachine Canal.

De night was dark lak' one black cat,
De wave run high an' fas',

Wen de captinne tak' de Rosie girl
An' tie her to de mas'.
Den lie also tak' de life preserve,
An' jomp off on de lak',
An' say, " Good-bye, ma Rosie dear,
I go tirovyu for your sak'."

It is necessary to warn English readers, unfortunately, that the Grande Lachine Canal (by means of which vessels avoid a dangerous stretch of rapids) is about a furlong in length, and that chambermaids are not' required on a lumber barge, because the crew sleep on top of the lumber. " M'sieu Smit'," a later essay in the far-fetched farcical, narrates the adventures of an English tenderfoot who goes shooting in the Canadian woodlands, taking with him a flat bath, a big sponge, and a bull-dog. His only victim is a she-bear, who dies of swallowing the sponge. Mr. Smith's triumphant escape from drowning in a patch of white water, when his canoe had upset, is a pleasing episode :

We t'ink M'sieu Smit' he is sure be drown,
Leetle w'ile we can't see heem again no more,
An' den he's come up from de place go down,
An' jomp on hees bat' tubbe an' try go shore.

We'n he's pass on de bat', he say " Hooraw ! "
An' commence right away for mak' some sing ;
I'm sure you can hear heem ten-twelve arpent
'Bout " Brittanie, she alway' mus' boss somet'ing."

There is a little too much circumstantial humour in these small farces for English readers ; though I think they would be effective enough if recited by, say, Mr. Matheson Lang, whose poleon Doret (it should be Dore, I suppose) might have stepped straight out of that new land of song, a land of domesticated

romance through which Drummond first cut a pathway. Mr. Matheson Lang has a genius for dialect parts ; the persons of the good doctor's graver and gentler verse (all of which is essentially dramatic) could all be brought to life again by the admirable artistry which charmed all who went to see " The Barrier/' a play that was saved by the players. Let us now enter this land of Drummond's *habitants,* travelling at our leisure

> Along de road from Bord a Plouffe
> To Kaz-a-baz-u-a,
> Were poplar trees lak' sojers stan',
> An' all de Ian' is pleas an' Ian'

and greeting everybody we meet in friendly wise. We may as well make it springtime, in order that the poet's picture of the Laurentian land's re-awakening may be quoted :

> O ! dat is de place w'en de spring tarn she's comin',
> Wen snow go away an' de sky is all blue—
> Wen ice lef' de water an' sun is get hotter,
> An' back on de medder is sing de gou-glou—
>
> Wen small sheep is firs' comin' out on de pasture,
> Deir nice leetle tail stickin' up on deir back,
> Dey ronne wit' deir moder, an' play wit' each oder.
> An' jomp all de tarn jus' de sam' dey was crack—
>
> An' ole cow also, she's glad winter is over,
> So she kick herse'f up, an' start off on de race
> Wit' de two-year-ole heifer, dat's purty soon lef her,
> Wy ev'ryt'ing's crazee all over de place !
>
> An' down on de reever de wil' duck is quackin',
> Along by de shore leetle san' piper ronne—
> De bullfrog he's gr-rompin' an' dore is jompin',
> Dey all got deir own way for mak' it de fonne.

It is a time of universal jocundity; the farmer sings an ancient folk-song as he drives his plough down the long ribbon-like field to the water's edge, and begins another as he turns uphill; a bird-voice of passionate intentness utters its carol of " Canada, Canada, sweet, sweet Canada " over and over again. Yet there is merriment enough here even when the whole country-side is snowed under, and the sheaves of the Northern Lights are rustling radiantly (I could always hear them) in a timeless sky and the phantasmal " Chasse Gallerie/' the aerial canoe manned by dead-and-gone adventurers from the Far West, passes shadow-like through the hither darkness, blotting out the keen starlight. On such a New Year's Eve the whole parish will be assembled in the " grande parloir " (or front kitchen) of the biggest farmhouse, awaiting the fiddler's pleasure to begin :

Ah, the pleasant quiet life I also have known so **well.**

XX

THE ANATOMY OF WIT

WHY do we laugh—you and I who have what is known as a sense of humour—at a witty remark ? Many attempts have been made to explain this curious phenomenon by means of a brief definition. But it has proved impossible to define wit wittily—at any rate, in such a way as to disclose the hidden source of the laughter which is a sudden discharge of psychic energy. The truth is that this problem, if it is to be solved at all, must be solved scientifically. That is to say, we must compare the different kinds of witticism, find what they have in common, and then investigate the why and how of the joyous explosion. Then, and not till then, shall we know what wit really is. It is generally supposed that the hearer of a jest is the person whose soul-state must be chiefly considered in such an investigation. Shakespeare takes this point of view in the famous lines in " Love's Labour's Lost " (Act v, scene 2) :

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it.

But there seems to be little or no truth in this popular belief. A witticism is a failure, of course, if those who hear it for the first time are not stirred to sudden laughter. But the inventor of a true witticism almost

always laughs at its birth inwardly or outwardly—my experience is that a keen sense of pleasure accompanies the act of gestation (as often as not sudden and unexpected), and expresses itself in a lonely chortle or some remark such as " That'll get him ! " addressed by the *ego* to the *me,* or, in extreme cases, by a loud laugh all to oneself.

Let us, then, consider the question of what wit is, scientifically, seriously, not as though it were a laughing matter. A witty explanation of wit is one of those chimeras with a greased tail which nobody has ever yet succeeded in catching. We must begin by looking at a small selection of specimens; and, as it happens, a book exists[1] which provides us with the required anthology ready-made. This work of Dr. Sigmund Freud is worth all his treatises on the nasty business of psycho-analysis so-called.

Many of Freud's specimen jests will be unfamiliar to English readers. So much the better ; an old joke is the one old friend we would all avoid, if we only could. He begins with the simple jests, a kind of word-play, which involve the condensation or separation of ideas. A good example of the condensation type is the remark of a witty Frenchman, who said he had had a long *tSte-d-bSte* with an acquaintance, a stupid beast of a fellow. Of the separation type Hood's remark that " to get his livelihood he had to be a lively Hood " is a classic instance. Newer and nearer to the nerve of risibility is the story, which came from Paris in war-time, of the Australian private who omitted to salute General Birdwood in passing. " 'Ow was I to know who he was ? " was the soldier's

[1] **"Wit and Its Reation to the Unconscious." By Dr. Sigmund Freud. Translated by A. A. Brill, Ph.B., M.D. Fisher Unwin. 1916.**

apology. " Why don't he wear a bunch of feathers behind as a bird would ? " The common or Co vent Garden pun comes next in the catalogue. It is the lowest form of wit, being not even a play upon words as words, but upon words as sounds (e.g. Professor Cromwell's remark that Rome in changing her religion exchanged Jupiter for Jew Peter) ! Puns have to be either excruciatingly bad or very ingenious indeed to win a laugh in these enlightened days. The alleged remark of an earwig before he fell off the garden-wall : " 'Ere we go ! " (should be spoken in a squeaky falsetto) is a triumph of brisk imbecility in this mode. And the masterpiece in elaborate sound-play is the following example, which dates from mid-Victorian times: *Q*. What musical work would have been mentioned if Gladstone had asked Disraeli to build a beehive ? *A*. Oratorio Judas Maccabeus (Hoary Tory, Oh do just make a bee-house).

Then there is the *double entente* jest (why in the world do people still call it a *double entendre* ?), of which innumerable instances could be given. A neat example is the reply of the courtier when Louis XV commanded him to concoct a jest at his (the King's) expense : "*Le rot n'est pas sujet.*" The very best examples seem to be more or less improper. A much subtler example is the brief history of the decline and fall of a rich American family by Horatio Winslow : " Gold mine, gold spoon, gold cure." It is an excellent variant of the clogs to clogs again in three generations of the Lancashire saying. But the best of the witticisms in this class are those which are based not on word-play but idea-play. There is, for example, the story of the man addicted to drink, who earned his living by giving lessons. His excesses became known and he lost most of his pupils. When a friend told

him that he could get and keep any number of pupils if he would only give up drink he was much annoyed. " What are you talking about ? " he indignantly rept'ed. " I am giving lessons so as to be able to get drink, for no other reason. And you come and tell me to give up drinking in order to give lessons ! Preposterous ! " Compare with this witticism the story of the deaf man whose doctor told him that his deafness was a result of chronic alcoholism (every day was an alcoholiday for him). He gave up drinking for a whole year and then relapsed, saying to his doctor : " Nothing I heard when I could hear was anything like as good as whisky." Sometimes the left-handed logic of such stories lies deep indeed. Dr. Freud shows how the sceptical touch may appee r in such stories. Two Jews met at a Galician railway station. " Where are you going ? " asked one of them. " To Cracow," was the reply. " What a liar you are ! " exclaimed the first speaker. " When you say you are going to Cracow, you want me to believe you are going somewhere else. Well, I know you are going to Cracow, so why say you are going to Cracow ? Why tell a lie about it ? " This is a much deeper thing than the well-known warning of the Cockney father to his son, not to drop his h's: " Don't say 'am, Bert; say 'am." But the profoundest witticisms of this type are those which reveal some human weakness in an absurd and un- -pected manner. The story, not as well known as it ought to be, of the Colonel's parrot and the new gardener is a laughable specimen. The Colonel had a liver, and also a flow of invective which the bird had also acquired. One day the parrot escaped from his cage and flew up to the roof. The new gardener, who did not know the bird, was ordered to fetch him down. When he got to the top of the ladder and

caught sight of the parrot, he exclaimed : " I'll have you in a minute, old claws-and-feathers ! " " Damn your eyes, sir ! " rapped out the parrot. Whereupon the gardener, recognizing his master's manner of speech in a crisis, touched his cap and said : " Beg your pardon, sir, I thought you was a bird/' This story, like that of Adam's refusal to find a name for the toad, may be used to test a new acquaintance's sense of humour. It illustrates the nature of the obsequious soul—just as an inadequate conception of cleanliness is illustrated by the remark of one of Dr. Freud's Galician Jews : " I always take a bath once a year, whether I want it or not."

The illogical, subtly disguised as sound logic, is often the secret of less obvious witticisms than those given in my first article. Here are some examples. A needy person borrowed a sovereign from a friend, who discovered him a few hours later eating turtle soup in an expensive restaurant. " Did you borrow that sovereign to buy turtle soup ? " asked the friend sarcastically. " You put me in a difficult position," said the other, shrugging his shoulders. '* If I have no money I can't get turtle soup. If I have money you object to me getting it. I should like to know when I may eat turtle soup." A somewhat similar example of what Dr. Freud calls " displacement-wit " (meaning that the logic is out of joint, dislocated in fact) is the story of the penniless person who asked a millionaire to give him the money for a visit to Ostend, so that he might take sea-baths for his health's sake. " I will assist you," said the millionaire, " but why go to such an expensive place as Ostend ? " " Sir," was the indignant reply, " nothing is too expensive for my health.'' Compare with these the anecdote of the *shnorrer,* or chartered Jewish beggar (Bruno Lessing's Lapidowitz

is the best specimen in fiction), who was given his Sunday dinner regularly at a certain rich man's house. One day he brought with him a young stranger, who at once, without a word of explanation, sat down at the dinner-table. " Who's that ? " asked the astonished host. "He is my son-in-law since the beginning of the week," replied the *shnorrer,* " and I have made a contract with him to supply all his meals for the first year." The masterful beggar, who is successful because he exacts alms instead of asking them as a favour, is revealed in all these three stories. The professional borrower who does not want to go a-sorrowing should carefully cultivate this magnificent impudence. A man-about-town lived on his friends for many years by the exercise of this particular gift. One of his constant sustainers, tired of seeing him so often, finally promised him £50 a year, paid quarterly, on condition that he never called again. " My good man," said the artistic dead-beat, " economize if you must, but don't insult me." A parallel story is that of the *shnorrer,* who, with others of his tribe, used to frequent the house of a charitable Jewish stockbroker. " Don't go up to-day," said one of the others whom he met on the doorstep. " The Baron is out of sorts and refuses to give anybody more than half a crown." " Of course, I shall go up," was the reply. " Why in the world should I make him a present of his half-crown ? Is he making me any presents ? " The same cosmopolitan Baron, finding himself deeply touched by a compatriot's tale of woe, rang for his servants and said, " For Heaven's sake, throw this fellow out of the house; he's breaking my heart."

The Jewish marriage-broker also provides Dr. Freud with a number of pleasant, unfamiliar ancedotes, in which wit, not humour, is the laughter-provoking

ingredient, the spice in an alien dish. Here are three of the best examples, all of which depend for their appeal to the nerve of risibility on the dealer's professional passion for detailed information. In each case his excess of zeal makes a mess of the situation, and causes the bargain to be called off. A would-be bridegroom went to see the prospective bride in company with the broker, in accordance with custom, and had his attention drawn to a glass cabinet, containing a very handsome silver tea-set. " That shows you how well off these people are," he observed. " But how I am to know," asked the suspicious young man, " that these things haven't been borrowed for the occasion ? " " What an absurd idea ! " exclaimed the marriage-broker. " Who in the world would think of lending these people anything ? " In the second case the young man in search of a wife was unpleasantly surprised by the young woman's physical imperfections. " Why did you bring me here ? " he whispered to the broker. " She's ugly and old, squints, and seems to have very little hair and hardly any teeth." " You needn't whisper," said the broker, aloud. " She's deaf, too ! " In the third story the broker brought along an assistant, who echoed his panegyrics on the would-be bride. " Tall and graceful as a pine-tree," said the broker. " A pine-tree of a girl," added the assistant. " And what wonderful eyes!" " Wonderful eyes," echoed the assistant. " And so clever and highly cultured ! " "Wonderful culture," added the echo. " And only one little imperfection," confessed the honest broker; " she has a slight hump." " And what a hump! " exclaimed the assistant, clasping his hands and looking up to the ceiling.

It is impossible, however, to make a complete

catalogue of all the varieties of wit. Witty definitions, for example, form by themselves a large and varied class. There is, for instance, Lichtenberg's definition of life. "Human life is divided into two periods; during the first one looks forward to the second; during the second one looks back to the first." This is an amplification of Pope's "Man never is, but always to be blest." Different from either witticism is the American definition of life as "one damned thing after another." Then there are the not unfamiliar definitions of optimist and pessimist, which I last saw in a soldier's journal. "An optimist is a man without any money at all who orders dinner at an expensive restaurant in the confident expectation that his first oyster will contain a pearl to pay for it. A pessimist on the other hand, is a man who has dined with an optimist." Then there are the typical American witticisms, which do not always depend on exaggeration for their effect. Mark Twain's account of an ancestor who "attended the first execution ever held in America and there received injuries from which he died" is almost Voltairian in its reticence. A novel example is the American story of the late German Emperor's visit to a military hospital, where he watched the amputation of a shell-shattered leg, expressing his *Kaiserlich* appreciation of the surgeon's dexterity with frequent cries of "Bravo, Professor." When the damaged leg had been removed, the Professor approached his Emperor, made a profound bow, and respectfully inquired: "Does your Majesty also command the amputation of the other leg? Or of an arm, which would not detain your Majesty quite so long?" There is an appropriate modicum of blood and irony in this story. German witticisms are infrequent; when found they are general in character, illustrating

the brutality and immorality of a race which is an amalgam of Priapus, Procrustes, and Pecksniff.

In all these examples some form of sense in nonsense is presented. Into Dr. Freud's elaborate analysis of the psychic action of wit I shall not adventure—he takes wit too seriously to be a suitable guide for non-German inquiries. But he is right, no doubt, in believing that there is an intimate connexion between the incongruities of wit and the phenomena of the dreamland in which we have all had such unexpected, exhilarating experiences. M. Bergson, a much better guide, because he is the wittiest of philosophers himself, sees the truth from another angle, when he defines the comic as " the mechanization of life," and finds its origin in blurred memories of childish tricks and toys. " We are too apt," he observes in his invaluable essay on the Passion of Laughter, " to ignore the childish element in most of our joyful emotions." Combining the two views, I am inclined to say that our joy in the incongruity of wit is derived from those early years in which dreamland was a real part of real life to us all—until grown-up people taught us otherwise and took away our viewless toys. The triumph of Mr. Charles Chaplin, a great actor in his medium, may be thus explained, so may Grock's. A jest, then, is a spiritual top, the movements of which parody the processes of our mature intelligence.

XXI

LONDON FROM THE THAMES

IT was ten o'clock on a breathless evening; the moon was not there to look at her sad face in the darkling waters; the stars shone steady in a violet Hour. Xs I lingered on Chelsea Embankment and caught a glimpse of the familiar church-tower to the right, it came into my mind that a certain painter (who will be famous a century hence) said of the same scene on a midsummer qvening *ten* years ago: " Doesn't it all look like a bad copy of a Whistler Nocturne ? " Painters are not so young as they were in those days ; Whistler himself is only an Old Master now. From the undecipherable levels below the parapet, where, all unseen all night long,

The ripples into loose rings wander and flee,

a breath of coolness was wafted, and I made up my mind to go down to Westminster by water. I whistled once, twice, thrice, and a cheery call answered me from under the bridge. The slim, green taxi-boat, with its driver in a green livery with brass buttons, hastened in a flurry of white water (the stream was against it) to the foot of the steep stone stairs. Presently I was gliding in a swift, rhythmic silence (just as if the Poet Laureate were stroking us) through long, converging lines of green-to-golden radiance towards the city of glory and governance which centres about

Westminster Abbey—and so on and on, if I chose, to that other city of wealth and a world-wide commerce, which was born of the fourfold traffic at London Bridge.

Of course there was no taxi-boat under the bridge ; I went home on the top of a motor 'bus. . . . There *was* a boat, as it happened, gliding through the shallows inshore ; a surreptitious craft which moved so noiselessly that its oars might have been muffled. Four men were rowing it ; a fifth held a lantern, and flashed its light hither and thither against the oozy wall at the foot of which the mud was beginning to show. This might have been Charon's wherry; I knew at once it was not seeking living passengers. . . . As I said, there was nothing for it but to go home on the top of a 'bus. But what a pity it is there are no taxi-boats plying for hire on the broadest and longest and most picturesque of London's thoroughfares! We cannot hope for a steamboat service such as Paris possesses. The Thames, unlike the Seine with its slow current, small range of tides, and good depths, is not very suitable for large steamboats, and small ones could not be run profitably—at any rate, if profit be measured in cash terms. Nor could the Thames watermen (of whom there were hundreds in Queen Anne's days) renew their ancient traffic in the straitened modern river, with its much swifter down-current, against which a sculler can make no headway anywhere between Putney Bridge (where the pleasure-river ends) and London Bridge. Until we have a fleet of taxi-boats, few Londoners will ever understand the history of London, which can only be read aright from the shining scroll that unwinds itself as you travel down the river from Chelsea Pier, say, to the immemorial bridge, which is the very *causa causans* of London's existence. At

sixpence a mile down-stream and a shilling a mile up-stream, taxi-boats would pay handsomely, I should think. Every visitor to London would make a point of using them.

The oldest writing on the storied scroll of this wondrous waterway has been interpreted by Mr. Hilaire Belloc and others, who know that the earliest history is set forth in maps. Invariably the all-important point of division which separates the lower from the upper part of a great navigable river is marked by the first bridge; and there the first town of economic and political consequence comes into being. It generally happens that this first town is the most important of all that are seated along the river. Rome, on the Tiber, is one example ; London on the Thames is another; Rouen on the Seine was a third until Normandy was merged in France. It would seem that London Bridge did not exist when Julius Caesar invaded this island, since he crossed higher up the river into what was then the less wealthy portion of the southern land. Or, it may be, there was a bridge there even then, and it was wrecked to impede the invader's operations. The ancient children's singing game, with its strange suggestion of the bridge-builder's human sacrifice and its fateful burden—

London Bridge is broken down,

may well have been a Druid sacrificial ceremony long before Caesar crowned his incessant labours from the " short and narrow verged shade " of the evergreen laurel. Indeed, it may have been that the dread ceremony, which is still remotely remembered by the little children of this most ancient city, originated in

the very act of destruction that seemed the only way of gaining time to cope with the first disciplined army seen in Britain. But, if the bridge was there, London was also there to see it all.

Higher up the stream we come on another piece of very ancient history. Watling Street, the most important of the four primeval routes across the Thames, comes over where the hideous suspension bridge runs from Lambeth to the Horseferry Road in Westminster. Horseferry Road ? The ferry existed there up to the time of the building of Westminster Bridge, and produced a fine revenue for the Archbishop of Canterbury in his neighbouring palace. It is easy enough to trace Watling Street up to the water's edge on the Surrey side. On the Middlesex side it is lost for a short distance. But it probably curved away in front of Buckingham Palace and proceeded in a direction parallel with, or perhaps identical with, Park Lane, and so into Edgware Road, where its clear track across north-west England begins. Note how some of the houses in Park Lane stand further back than others. That is because they are lined up to the boundaries of ancient "Long Acres," elongated farms that had frontages on the river, and must have exactly resembled the ribbon-like tilths of the French-Canadian farmers which the traveller to Quebec sees along the St. Lawrence. The prehistoric Park Lane may have been an irregular line of tiny shacks lined up with staring ox-eye windows (glassless, of course) along the street's beginning.

Thus to the traveller by London's deserted waterway the antiquity of a city that may well be " half as old as Time," and the vital principle of its growth into a petrified magnificence are luminously revealed. It is true that he may not gain thereby any clear impression

of the small white city of the Middle Ages, the virginal London as yet unwedded to the sea, of which the historians know so little. But many an episode in the later annals of London is a rosary-bead of remembrance strung on the shining cord of the eternal river. In Tudor times the Royal residences were situated along the Middlesex bank, and splendid barges, manned by oarsmen in livery, were constantly coming and going between them. The City Companies all had their state-barges and liveried watermen. Great river pageants were numerous; high-placed criminals travelled down to their death on the ebbing tide. Ambassadors and other envoys of foreign powers were met at Gravesend by the Lord Mayor and his Aldermen, and taken by river in a stately progress to Tower Stairs. The regular route westward was by river to Putney, thence by road across Putney Heath. That way went Wolsey, when deprived of the Great Seal, travelling from York House to Esher in disgrace—until he fell in with the King's messenger on the heath and knew he was his master's man once more. In a later age the entry into London of Catherine of Braganza, the consort of Charles II, was a memorable example of the river pageant. In old days the City roads were markets rather than thoroughfares; so that if anybody wished to go from one part of the city to another he went by river willy-nilly. And so if he had to travel to Chelsea, Fulham, or Greenwich; for the roads were quagmires in bad weather, and at all times haunted by highwaymen and footpads. Pepys, that type of the patriotic permanent official, always used the river. Such phrases as " by water to Whitehall " and " so by water home " constantly occur in his diary. In Queen Anne's reign there were over a hundred " stairs " or landing places in London proper.

The watermen were the " cabbies " of that age. The really curious thing is that the Thames was still a main thoroughfare less than sixty years ago. Not until 1857 did the Lord Mayor's Show proceed to Westminster otherwise than by water.

If there were taxi-boats we should not put an end to our historical explorations at London Bridge, which is still " the " bridge to the older riverside folk. But we should expect our taxi-boatman to " drive " more carefully in the broader reaches below. Above we have in tempestuous weather the chopped waves of a lake pent among hills. Below the waterman meets with more massive fluctuations and, as everybody knows who has been rowed down past St. Paul's, he must manoeuvre his craft with extreme caution, taking advantage of all the shelter afforded by strings of barges, the hulls of steam tugs, and the innumerable wharves. The most careful navigating directions were insisted on by the old Watermen's Company in these lower and more dangerous reaches; with the result that accidents were infrequent, much less common, indeed, than is the case to-day along the congested east-to-west roads and streets. The taxi-boatman would find these navigating directions worth learning by heart if he wished to secure his fare's safety, and at the same time save his petrol in the wilder and wider reaches, russet-winged on either shore, of that which a French poet spoke of as

> Une maree infecte, et toujours avec l'onde
> Apportant, remportant les richesses du monde.

He must have travelled down on a grey day when the smoke-wreaths hung low, and missed seeing how the sunlight can glorify the grey tower of St. Magnus*

Church, the deadly-white facade of the Custom House, and the ominous quadragon of the White Tower, with its four dark cupolas. There are pictures and to spare down-stream, when the spectacle of St. Paul's has passed by into the fluctuant radiance of the west on a fine summer's day. It is a pity Whistler never saw them ; if he had he might have forsaken the lamps of riverside Chelsea and the mouse-angels, symbols of his nocturnal moods, which flit about them—or used to do so until the acrid green of incandescent gaslight which has now been installed there drove them into dim, sequestered gardens. Here, in the reaches of Dockland, we are not in the historic London, but in that great seaport for ever extending itself down either shore towards the rising sun, which is the lusty child of London's marriage with the sea.

There was a boat at Chelsea moving silently, stealthily, with a bright questing eye, through the inshore shallows. It was one of the Thames Police wherries which regularly patrol the river by day and by night, from Blackwall up to Barnes. These keen-eyed craft have their customary beats, each remaining on duty for six hours at a stretch. They work from four stations, at Blackwall, Wapping, Waterloo Bridge, and Barnes. Their chief business is to circumvent the river thieves, a daring race of specialists, who steal from lighters and barges and wharves whenever they get a fair chance. The professional coal dredger, who fishes up coal with a trawl net and sells it for a shilling or two the hundredweight, is a frequent offender. He is always working along the river in his grimy boat, which is often an unclaimed derelict

bought for a few shillings at the King's Tobacco Ground, a species of pound for wreckage and dinghies that have cut adrift and the like. It is hard for this night-bird to make an honest living in the dark (coal-fishing in broad daylight is an overcrowded profession), and when the police-boat has gone by he sometimes " finds " a keg of butter or even a chest of tea and hides it under his muddy coal. To prevent and detect thieving is the principal employment of the Thames Police, many of whom are old sailormen, but they have many other duties—the most dismal of all being the arresting jrf drowned bodies, whose staring faces are photographed for the ghastly album kept at the Wapping Station, which is Charon's headquarters in a manner of speaking. Thither many dead men travel at their leisure and the traditional obol is never required of them. For thousands and thousands the regal waterway has been a river of restfulness ; every wave thereof has been for some sad creature a wandering grave or shaken pall. There is a strange superstition among the riverside folk that he or she whose mother has drowned herself in the Thames must sooner or later be drawn deathward by the same strong, shining arm of the sea. To such a one Fate might speak as follows :

Ah, not as thy playmates are,
Kings in disguise from afar ;
Each thought like a windtost spark,
Each heart like a rose in the dark.

The life thou must bewail
Is a fever caught in a jail;
The scarlet of thy lip
Is the mark of the jailer's whip.

Thou shalt bear an orb of doom
As ponderous as the tomb
Of porphyry gleaming on high,
Where thy father shall come to lie.

Thou shalt voyage in lonely state
Dark waters that rock to fate,
As thy mother was drifted down,
Wave-scourged through the wide-bridged town.

It is all very tragical, but—what about those taxi-boats ?

XXII

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

I HAVE long been convinced that the annual business of exchanging Christmas presents could be much more effectively organized. It has a sound ethical basis: it is based on the mutually-accepted principle that it is more blessed to give than receive. Unfortunately the virtue of the principle often vanishes in its application, leaving on either side a residuum of discontent. It is not blessed to receive a gift which is utterly detestable in your eyes. It is still less blessed to inflict a grossly inappropriate gift on a friend or acquaintance. Such transactions, which are far too frequent, serve only to spread the moral dry-rot that is known as hypocrisy. It may be objected that friends or relations ought to know one another's tastes too well to fall into this pitfall. In theory it should be so ; in practice the misunderstanding is almost always mutual. Married people are in a position to make the closest study of one another's predilections, yet it is well known that many a marriage has been marred, or even unmade, by incompatibility of Christmas presents. There is only one way of avoiding the disappointments and discontents which arise under the existing system and cast a gloom over many a grown-up person's Christmas-tide. *Let the Christmas present take the form of money, and all will be well.*

Cheques figure in almost every list of wedding-

presents, and there is no valid reason why they should not be given on other occasions, annual or accidental. The recipient of your Christmas cheque will be able to buy what he or she really requires, and, what is more, will have the pleasure of spending the money, the adventurous joy of going from shop to shop until the last sixpence has been expended. No conditions should be attached to this gift in kindness, not in kind. The recipient should be left at liberty to use the money to pay bills, or save it up against a rainy day, or put it on the favourite or an outsider, or add it to other gifts of the kind, so that the cost of a new motor-car or a visit to some Continental winter resort might be defrayed. Perhaps the adoption of this plan would increase your annual outlay on the compliments of the season; the piece of jewellery, which looks as if it cost ever so much more than *it* did, could not be utilized to deceive a friend and degrade your own too thrifty soul. On the other hand, you also would profit by receiving suitable sums in the place of gifts that are manufactured to be given away—mostly they seem to come from Germany. And what fun it would be to tot up the items on either side of the account, and find you had come out 17s. 6d., say, to the good after handsomely remembering all your friends, acquaintances, and relations. The credit margin would be an index to your acceptability (it outweighs all other abilities) in the eyes of the world. If, on the other hand, a balance against you revealed a falling off in popularity, the warning would set you considering ways and means of getting back into the good graces of your fellow-mortals. The happiest consequences would follow from the general adoption of my plan. The Christmas counters, for example, would cease to be laden with those pretentious trifles which are bought

in sheer desperation, by persons too bewildered to make a rational choice. Sells (in electro-plate or bogus crocodile skin) would no longer be sold in the shops. Then the lover would be able to send the beloved a really useful present at Christmas time—enough to provide him, poor dear, with the smart new overcoat he could not otherwise afford, or to supply her, poor darling, with the fascinating new hat which could not be squeezed out of her trifle of pin-money. It is easy enough to translate such felicitous gift-giving into more opulent circles of life, where missing new model cars and sable sets take the place of overcoats and hats that cannot be procured at present. And is there any pleasure so secretively sweet, as a lover's sight of the beloved *wearing* a gift of love's bestowing—clothes, I mean, which are so intimately worn. It is hardly worth while dealing with the foolish idea that these or any other Christmas money-gifts would be derogatory to the giver or to the recipient. There is no taint of the dishonourable in honest cash, honestly come by and honestly bestowed, nor any touch of vulgarity in the free and friendly exchange thereof, if custom sanctions it. The heart can be as securely sent in a folded cheque as in a bitter-ugly vanity bag, or a supercilious new-art teacaddy—Lord save us, what monstrosities I have seen in the shops every Christmastide !

This is a conservative-minded city, and I am not so foolish as *to* believe that my plan will be adopted forthwith. It is the only logical solution of an intricate problem, but I know—as the late Benjamin Jowett knew—that the world is not governed by logic. It would soon be accepted, however, if a few social personages would make a point of imparting lists of their Christmas presents to the Press. The

Press would show its usual receptivity, especially if the lists were ready for publication on Boxing Day. It is a day on which news of a crowd-compelling kind is seldom plentiful; where space often has to be filled in with short stories of charitable feasts, in which such phrases as " the inmates then partook of a hearty dinner of roast beef, plum-pudding, and mince-pies " are apt to recur so often that anybody who read them (nobody does) would be in danger of nervous dyspepsia. Every news editor would be delighted to publish the following list of the chief presents receivable on Christmas Day by Reggie Ripwell, that popular young man round about town, and afterwards inspected by his friends. Reggie's explanatory comments are added in some instances :—

The Bishop of Bloomsbury : Tantalus box of paper-less cigarettes, containing 1oo Czecho-Slovakian, 1oo Eygptian, 1oo American, and 50 Russian cigarettes.

The Duke of Omnium : Postal Order.

Mr. and Mrs. Harringay-Hapgood : Cheque.

(" The Duke's order is twice as much as their beastly cheque.")

The President of St. Thingumbob's and Mrs. Dobbs : A cullender.

(" It's a frightful mistake, of course. The dear old chap writes so frightfully spidery that the people at the Stores sent it instead of a calendar. Shows the disadvantages of dealing at a place where they sell anything from a stuffed *ichthyosaurus* to an aluminium toothpick. She writes much worse than he does—copied out all his books, she did !—and if *she'd* written to the Stores, I might have got the *ichthyosaurus,* what! ")

Mrs. Vivienne Vandeleur: Hot-water bottle in caoutchouc.

Samuel Hoadley, M.P., and Miss Hoadley: Folio volume of " Samuel Hoadley's speeches to his constituents 1906-10, printed for private circulation."

(" It'll be worth a lot as a before-the-first edition some day, I don't think.")

The Master of Gorbals : Set of silver auto-studs.

(" Why *auto-studs* ? That's what's been worrying me all day. Perhaps they get in and get out of their own accord.")

The Rajah of Hubblebubblepore: Complete works of Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

(" She's the American poetess, you know, who's turned ' Life is real, life is earnest' into oratorios and operas. The kind of hot-stuff you find in refrigerators. Must be popular in tropical countries.")

Macpherson Pasha and Harem : Sanitary hookah.

(" He's one of the very few Mohammedan Scotchmen ; he's standing in with the Young Turks. The hookah's his own invention, just patented ; the smoke passes through whisky and improves its flavour, the Pasha says. If he was an ordinary Scotchman I'd hae ma doots. But he's a really pious Scotch Mohammedan, and there must be something in it. I shall make my man try it some day, poor devil.")

Miss Beulah Shufflebotham: A year's subscription to " The Woman Voter. "

Lady Cynthia Luddenduddenfoot: A year's subscription to the same.

(" So I can spare you a copy any time you want it.")

Miss Drusilla Learoyd: Honourably-mentioned Ham and Recipe.

(" er father breeds those big white Yorkshire pigs that could hold the scrum against as many hippopotami. She's a bit on the large scale herself. The recipe says the ham's to be cooked in a pasty; not

boiled, which would let the white flavour escape. I'll have to buy the biggest hip-bath to be got for money —or would *you* like to have the ham ? ")

Mrs. Megavissey-Tregumbo: Set of free-folding pyjama-stretchers.

Major Coote de Coote : Cheque.

(" Jolly good—but it's not to be cashed till he's paid his income-tax.")

Porky Nupkins: Bottle of lotion for strengthening the abdominal muscles.

(" Dear old Porky's my boxing instructor. There's a letter with the bottle that says : ' This here stuff stiffens the slats wonderful. Rub it in morning and night, never mind the smell, Dempsey could never put the Frenchie away so disgraceful if he done that morning and night, Sundays likewise. Porky's benefit's on the second Saturday in January. Wily old fing ! ")

Sims Cutler, M.D. : Cabinet containing a specimen of every known pill in the latest edition of the " British Pharmacopoeia."

(" One of 'em ought to be useful some day, what! ")

Uncle Charley: Osmium-faced putter in case.

Uncle Reggie : Cheque.

(" Not often a relation does you so well.")

Mr. and Mrs. Sprigge-Pettigrew: Complete set of National Insurance stamps unlicked (very rare).

Miss Rosemary Tuttle : Tango Tea-set.

(" When the teapot and milk-jug are not too full, you wind the thing up and they dance a tango together. There's a music-box in the sugar-basin. I wonder who invents these far-fetched mechanical toys.")

Miss Ducky Daddies (Stoll Circuit): Surprise cushion.

Aunt Gussie : Hot-water bottle.

Aunt Keturah : Hot-water bottle.

(" Nice to have a triple change of these things. They say there's a great run on them as presents for young men this season. I'm afraid we're a sorry generation, and everybody knows it. Even a fellow's aunts think he must be coddled and tucked up or fall into a decline.")

Sir Stephen Samphire: Greek urn containing ashes of Olympic heavy-weight wrestler, cremated *circa* **420 B.C.**

(" He's the famous excavator and archaeologist, you know : digs up Sparta and all that sort of thing. A letter came with the pot to warn me it was haunted. The fellow's ghost comes out and tries his Olympic holds on you. But Samphire, who's a bit of a Hackenschmidt, says the ghost can't wrestle for nuts. He flattened it out easily with an ordinary leg-hold. It was so delighted at learning a new trick that Samphire got the whole of its autobiography, and he's going to write a pamphlet showing what rotters the old Olympic victors were; any Public School could have knocked spots off a team of them. All the same, I don't keep that pot in my bedroom.")

Lieutenant R. P. L. Tregumbo, R.N.: Grey parrot that talks blue.

(" Now that's a natty present—good old Gumbo ! For Heaven's sake keep the green baize on ; blue's not the word for that bird's small-talk.")

Rev. Cyprian Pegler, B.D.: Dozen of College Port.

(" Look here, old chap, you pinch one of the bottles, and **I'll** take another, and we'll barge off into my den. It's the best stuff in the St. Thingumbob's cellars ; just enough left to last C.P.'s time. And he *knows*; oh, *he* knows. No black-strap for that old sportsman. You've seen all that's really intriguing in the show—

two more cliques left, and all the rest hack-presents. Hurry up before the women raise a view-halloo ! ")

Reggie certainly got some talk-provoking presents. They used to get miscellaneous assortments of presents at Rome at the Saturnalia (just about Christmas time), and Martial tells us any old things were welcomed. Sabellus, a lawyer, rejoices over his little lot:

> Hos fastus animosque dat Sabello
> Farris semodius fabaeque fresae,
> Et turis piperisque tres selibrae,
> Et Lucanica ventre cum Falisco,
> Et nigri Syra defruti lagona,
> Et ficus Libyca gelati testa
> Cum bulbis cocleisque caseoque.

(half a peck of meal, half a peck of bruised beans, a pound and a half of frankincense, a pound and a half of pepper, a Lucanian sausage, a haggis from Falerii, a glass flask of dark must, and a Libyan jar of crystallized figs, along with onions, snails, and cheese. There's more to follow : it all sounds like a hamper of delicatessen.) Sabellus would have preferred cash, no doubt. Certainly Reggie would have preferred cheques or even postal orders in every case. Such a list would be a godsend to a news editor in the shortest days. And, as I have said, the publication on Boxing Day of a few such lists would soon dispose of any lingering doubts as to the propriety of expressing one's Christmastide benevolence in terms of currency.

The question of Christmas presents from grown-ups to children of various ages has not been discussed. But in many cases it is permissible to give children the money to spend for themselves rather than inflict an incongruous present on them. They have their

likes and dislikes just as their elders have ; their tastes are so often ignored ; their love of shopping is as keen as ours. If you doubt the truth of this statement, give a ten-year-old maiden a " Fisher" (having first obtained her mother's permission), and escort her on a shopping expedition. Last week I made the experiment—not for the first time—and the results confirmed my general theory. No present could have given my young woman the pleasure she got out of its equivalent in—power! She gave the shop-people a good deal of trouble, and was quite candid about her intentions. " I like lots of your toys," she said at one counter, " but I can't 'ford to buy what I really and truly want. Good-bye and thank you ! " And she shook hands with the shop-lady at the counter who did not seem displeased, poor weary, kindly soul! It *was* a lady at the counter ; it is so, very often, in every sense of a term that must never be lightly used, lest it lose its fragrance as of treasured rose-leaves.

XXIII

THE WISE MÆNAD

SEVEN years ago—half of time it seems—I paid my first tribute of wonderment to the French poetess who inscribed on the title page of her second book the sentence from Plato's " Banquet " : " My heart beats more tumultuously than the pulse of the priests of Cybele." I have been reading once more the strophes of this Hellenic princess married into an ancient French house, and j&nd myself still convinced, in spite of the gigantic meteor of war that has passed by, changing all men's hearts in its passing, that she is the greatest poet in Europe. D'Annunzio, who brought Italy into the War and now tries to bring her out of the Peace (such as it is), is her only possible rival, as I still think. It was the late Melchior de Vogue who first saw in the flights of this winged soul, half-eagle and half-dove,

Vers les azurs secrets and les divins midis,

a likeness to the lofty poetry of Victor Hugo, and christened her " Le Grand Poete." But my new name for her is the Wise Maenad, for the secret of her art is to have interwoven Hellenic ecstasies with the homely but lasting-ripe wisdom of France, whose adopted daughter she is.

It is the sudden, sweet homeliness of the Comtesse de Noailles in her corybantic ardours and endurances

which so endears her to the critic of human nature and is the final proof of her greatness, a thing apart from all the other singers and makers of France. Indeed, it is this gift which enables her to cross the gulf of silence that lies between the two literary nations of France, the *bien-pensants* and the *intelleduels.* Even though she sees her heart symbolized as a ripening pear, she is happy and at home in walled gardens, marshalling the ranks of her scarlet-runners in their brave uniforms or counting the pears ranged in straw on the shelves as an expeditionary force, or listening to the sleep-provoking buzz of a wasp in the sunny window-pane:

> O peuple parfume des fruits,
> Vous que le chaud ete compose
> De cieux bleus et de terre rose,
> Vous, seve dense, sucre mol,
> Ne"s des jeux de Tair et du sol,
> Vous qui vivez dans une creche,
> Petits dieux de la paille fraiche,
> Compagnons de l'arrosoir vert.
> Des hottes, des beches de fer,
> Gardez-moi dans la douce ronde
> Que forme votre odeur profonde !

She can at such times become as near and dear as our own Herrick, singing of homely matters with a poignant yet familiar sweetness, like honey dripping from the honeycomb, and preferring to all the far-away wonders of the world some wonted visage of Time:

> Bien plus que pour Bagdad dont le seul nom etonne,
> Que pour Constantinople, ineffable Houri,
> Je m'emeus quand je vols dans un matin d'automne
> Le clocher de Corbeil ou de Chateau-Thierry.

A Wise Maenad indeed, thus to rest in the slow sunshine from her lofty quests over vast horizons for the absolute Love. She has not found it, she never will find it; all that remains for her after the last and longest quest of all is the certainty that earth has never yet seen a truly happy love-affair, that in love as in death men and women are still lonely and forlorn for ever, that the " sombre accident quotidien de la mort" is the end of all happiness and unhappiness :

Je vivais, je disais les choses ephemeres :
Les sidcles renaissaient dans mon verbe assuree
Et, vaillante, en depit d'un coeur desespere,
Je marchais, en dansant, au bord des eaux ameres.

A present, sans ddtour c'est presentee a moi
La verity certaine, achevee, immobile ;
J'ai vu tes yeux fermes et tes levres steriles.
Ce jour est arrive", je n'ai rien dit, je vois.

Je m'emplis d'une vaste et rude connaissance,
Que j'acquiers d'heure en heure, ainsi qu'un noir tresor.

Qui me dispense une apre et totale science :
Je sais que tu es mort . . .

Here ends the first stage of the Mystic's familiar progress. How and why she came so far afield through the deserts of Eternity (which Marvell saw on either hand as he and his beloved hurled themselves "thorough the iron gates of Life") is darkly told in a series of triumphant lyrics and despairing elegies. There was never a moment in all her six years (1907-13) of travelling with a travelling companion that the ending was not descried at the vanishing point of passion's perspective that she could not say to him :

Toi si gai, si content, si rapide et si brave,
Qui regnes sur l'espoir ainsi qu'un conquerant,
Tu rejoindras aussi ce grand peuple d'esclaves
Qui git, muet et tol6rant.

Je le vois comme un point delicat et solide
Par dele les instants, les horizons, les eaux,
Isole, fascinant comme les Pyramides,
Ton etroit et fixe tombeau.

Nay, even when she watched for him in the dawning she confesses—in an elegy of Sapphic outspokenness—that the finality was foreseen, which is the shadow of Love's tomb falling along the bridal bed.

There is no taint of fleshliness in her most intimate communings; at all times she cultivates the Oxford poet's triad of necessities :

Fresh air, cold water, and a sense of humour,

and her verse is as fresh and virginal as Christina Rossetti's when she seems to be casting amber beads into a silver basin or playing a fugue on blue bells. It is this gift of pellucidity in passion which sets her above d'Annunzio, her only possible rival for the Laureateship of the Latin world. She hates all the stratagems of Love ; above all others that which treats the beloved as the victim of a brutish warfare, a creature to be played with as a cat plays with a mouse—in order that pity may supervene and love be renewed out of sheer perversity. She hates herself for thinking and saying:

O xnon ami, soufirez, je saurai par vos larmes,
Par vos regards eteints, par votre anxiete,
Par mes yeux plus puissants contre vous que des armes
Par mon souffle, qui fait bouger vos volontes,

Par votre ardente voix qui s'eleve et retombe,
Par votre egarement, par votre air demuni,
Que ma vie a sur vous cet empire infini
Qui vous attache a moi comme un mort a sa tombe !

It is in her novels, perhaps, that her human heart is most clearly revealed. They all show us a woman of passionate temperament, ardent, agonizing, fiercely tender, suddenly indifferent, with the continence called pride, who seeks in sensation, and the sentiment which is its shadow, a Love that is eternal and sufficient to itself. So, to use the quaint metaphor of Madame Mary Duclaux, " imprisoned in the tyrannous circle of her own personality, she turns round upon herself, like a squirrel in a cage." Or, as I would say it, her Ego is an *oubliette* from which there is no escape, perhaps not even in death. And the most that remains at the long last of all the wondrous adventures of passion is a stigma in either hand, a bruise where the too-heavy ladder of Calvary was grasped in vain, for none can move it nowadays.

The war has come and gone, and the hearts of men are changed. And some still believe that, as a result of a barbarian invasion from below instead of without, the Millennium can be achieved. I await with eagerness the next book of this undaunted daughter of desires, who is sister to our own Emily Bronte and her own Sappho. But her new message will surely be a version of the old :

O beaute de toute la terre,
Visage innombrable des jours,
Voyez avec quel sombre amour
Mon coeur en vous se desaltere.

XXIV

BETTER-ENGLISH WEEK

SOME time ago a kindly and judicious critic on the other side of the Atlantic said I was apt to " have a chip on my shoulder " when touching on an American topic. To put a chip on one's shoulder is a silent challenge to pugnacious bystanders to try and knock it off, whereupon a joyous all-in scrap would begin—it is roughly equivalent to the alleged Irish custom of trailing a coat and daring anybody to tread on the tail of it. (As a matter of fact, only the stage Irishman who wishes you " the top o' the morning " and calls you " a broth of a boy " ever indulges *in* such picturesque provocation.) I can put my hand on my heart, however, and solemnly declare that, even when running down the Boston " Brahmins " and running up Mark Twain, I never sought a quarrel with American critics. The truth is that I cannot bring myself to think of American literature as a thing apart from ours, knowing that our greatest authors, at any rate down to the close of the eighteenth century, are as much America's as England's, and using the same freedom of ap- and de-preciation with regard to American authors as I do with regard to those made in England. So, having made my peace with God and any American critic who looks at this dissertation, let me say how much I admire the new American institution of a " Better-English Week," and how I wish it could be adopted here, where there is even greater need for

keeping the well of English undefiled by slang words or slovenly habits of speech.

"Better-English Week" originated with the Committee on American Speech, which was organized early in 1915 for the purpose of "conserving our melodious English tongue and improving our speech manners" by the National Council of Teachers of English. The idea has been worked out in various ways, some of a permanent nature and other current during the special week (November 1 to November 8) of specific reformation. For example, one school has its own particular "Aint'less week"; others inscribe the commonest violations of good grammar on a shield set up where all the pupils can see it; others, again, exhibit posters bearing such a legend as "Have you a speaking acquaintance with final G's?" Where foreign immigrants are massed together, more specialized methods of improving pronunciation have been found advisable. Thus in one city where Italian children are numerous, and find a difficulty in getting the "th" sound (they say "dis" for "this," and so on) a "Stick Out Your Tongue Club" has been formed in a certain school *in* order to teach these young Americans in the making to use their lips and not swallow their voices, so to speak. It is found that proper lip training tends to banish "I yusta," "don chu," and "waja say," slipshod colloquialisms which are just as common here as they seem to be in America. The Do Without Club of Detroit, to take another example, agrees to abolish one slang phrase each week. Finally, here is the famous pledge taken last year by thousands of young people in Detroit:

I love the United States of America, I love my country's flag, I love my country's language. I promise:—

i. That I will not dishonour my country's speech by leaving off the last syllables of words ;

2. That I will say a good American " yes " and "no " instead of an Indian grunt " umhum " and " nup um " or a foreign " ya " or " ye " and " nope " ;

3. That I will improve American speech by enunciating distinctly and by speaking pleasantly and sincerely ;

4. That I will try to make my country's language beautiful for the many boys and girls of foreign nations who come here to live;

5. That I will learn to articulate correctly one word a day for one year.

Thus a concerted effort, year by year increasing its range and efficacy, is being made over there to root out sloppy and slovenly expressions and silly slang-phrases and, in the matter of pronunciation, to live up to Emerson's saying that " a good voice has a charm in speech as in song." Indeed, the American philosopher, who was the heir of Sir Thomas Browne in the art of writing English sentences that have the colour and ring and gravity of gems, was perfectly right—let memory take you back through the long years that have been, judicious reader, and echoes of beautiful speech will return to you as often as the bright glimpses of beautiful and beloved faces. A beautiful face may leave you coldly admiring—but a beautiful voice always stirs the heart, and may haunt you to the end of living.

I am sure we need a Better-English Week, as much as the Americans, perhaps even more. Some may regret the killing of the old English dialects, especially the virile northern dialects, the broader vowels of which are so infinitely refreshing to one exiled in the South and long accustomed to the nasalized yapping of Cockneys. But I myself, who uses the communal

or " classic " English in ordinary conversation, and can still speak the Doric of Edwin Waugh (the Lancashire Burns) fluently at need, believe it possible to speak Attic English without forgetting your Doric or Ionian cradle-tongue. It should be possible, given a Better-English Week and the cautionary methods originating in the working out of the basal idea, to put an end to the clipping of the King's English (which is a worse crime to my mind than clipping coins bearing his face and titles), the snarling of vowels, the wearing down of consonants, and the intrusion of town-made slang which are so distressingly common among all sorts and conditions of English people to-day. The talk of quite tiny children is often a sheer delight to the ear. They have but few words and regard them as bright treasures, like the newly minted coins presented to them on birthdays or at Christmastide, and dole them out resonant and intact (" the " does not become " ther " nor " a " " er " as with the grown-ups), as if they were kingly gifts, as indeed they should be. But when they are a few years older this full, clear resonance is utterly lost as a rule, and their speech is apt to become as unmusical as the rattling of a stick against railings. The mispronunciation of vowels is a veritable disease among the people of our great towns, both young and old. The following story is a chestnut, but it illustrates the kind of degeneration that is taking place. A teacher wrote the word " baby " on the blackboard, and asked her class to pronounce it. With one accord they cried: " biby." She then wrote " biby" on the board, and they all said: " boiby." Here, again, is a dialogue between two pretty girls—pretty to look at, but not to listen to—which I overheard yesterday in a Tube train:

Hemly ; " Owlizwhatyerdoinere ? "

Liz ; " Owbijnessyusalhemly."

Hemly ; " Owserb ? Eraveyergotternuvverchepolefing."

Liz ; " Erbsorfyounglizandonyerwanternotoomech."

Clotted speech, if you like, and without any Devonshire freshness! The sooner we start a " Better-English Week " in the nation's schools the better for life and letters in the future, and I commend this suggestion of a really useful piece of work to those who waste their own and other people's time pressing the claims of Simplified Spelling and other crinkum-crankums.

XXV

THE DAILY HUMORIST

THE mediæeval jester must always have been a man of his hands, very like the famous Chicot with his razor-edged, beautifully balanced little axe. So it comes about in these latter days, when the daily humorist is in attendance at the Court of King Demos (and a merry, merry King is he in this laughter-loving land !) and practises his craft on the music-hall stage or in his corner of a popular newspaper, that the substance of a *man* can always be discerned in every suit of crowd-compelling motley. The late Twells Brex was an example of the hero in motley, for even if we did not know that many of his daily jests were thought out on his painful death-bed, we must needs feel the influence of a gentle and valiant spirit in every line of " copy " he ever wrote against time. And we—we band of brothers who get a certain paper out night after night—can never forget another rare good-humorist, the late J. D. Irvine (" J. D. " to the Street of Adventure and all the by-ways thereof, which reach to the ends of the earth and beyond 'em), whose large and mellow character I tried to define *in* homely verse :

Quaint tales he told of women, wine, and song,
God-given gifts he loved, his whole life long,
Or thoughtful grown, dispensed, with eager looks,
The treasures he had won from oft-read books—

Wild flowers of Burns, white stars of Shakespeare's soul,
And thunderous jests from Rabelais's lips that roll
(The Sage of Meudon, less celibacy,
Seemed to him all a man might amply be).
Deep versed was he in all the actor's art,
And well he played each momentary part,
Dissolving boredom with a jocund laugh
And still devising stratagems of chaff.

Death grudged him to our faithful fellowship,
And fixed on him a foul, arresting grip.
Then did he live indeed ! Maintaining still
The might of man's unconquerable will
He smiled on us and put his torture by,
Scoffed at the flesh and gave his death the lie.

But of all those who have practised in the Press as daily humorists, Ivan Heald, who " went West/' after leaving the haunted beaches of GallipoH and reaching the dazzling freedom of the skies, was surely the most memorable person.

Not even on the fantastical journey to Tang-Tang-Torrop (where the Long Porter sits and longs for another gift of bash) do you meet with such whim-whams as Ivar; Heald discovers in his morning constitutionals through the commonplace. In unexplored uncharted regions of the Tube stairways—" No one treads their steps; from week-end to week-end footstep never breaks on the mysterious silence of their solitary spirals"—he finds young couples living rent-free in cultured comfort, having worked wonders with a few palms and a creeper round the iron handrail. He escorts you to Bloomsbury, U.S.A., of which unexpected city " the chief industries are sight-seeing and borrowing each other's copies of the New York papers," and where " there are white-coated magicians

in the hotels who can mix every known cocktail from the ' Angel's Anthem ' to the ' Zulu's Curse.' "

He ventures on the highest escalator ever ascended by mankind, and the superintending official promises to try and identify the particular step which bit a piece out of his trousers. He watches a Final Cup-tie from a tree, in the upper branches of which a Northern enthusiast assists his side in kicking terrific goals. He circumnavigates London on a motor-bus by the All Red Route, having taken a tearful farewell of his friends and promised one of them to bring a queen parrot back with him. The Cecil and the Savoy are seen on the starboard quarter, so close that the voyagers can almost hear the people taking soup. He invents a way of living at first-rate hotels without ever paying a bill—you go there late at night in a long overcoat, having left your trousers at a pawnshop, and you have breakfast in bed and then send for the manager and sternly put the question : " Where are they ? " It is clear the Ireland he comes from is the land of green ginger. This comes out in his irreverent account of the Arran Islands, where the chief industry is supplying local colour to the Irish Players, and only the cows that are expert botanists can get a living, and the islanders wear their shoes raw, walking around^in " pampooties " which can be grilled with a few *saute* potatoes, if they don't fit. He gets expelled from the Anarchist Conference in spite of telling the comrades that he headed the Barcelona bomb-throwing averages. He visits a milliner's shop where the pheasant's wing or brace of partridges on a hat are served up with the appropriate vegetables. He rebukes pretty ladies for exceeding the scent limit.

His war letters are full of the echoes of the shimmering, innocuous satire which make him so popular with

his comrades of the Hood Battalion, Charles Lister, and Cyril Asquith, and F. S. Kelly (champion sculler and musician), and Patrick Stewart and the rest.

Often he shows himself capable of grim, pithy description, full of echoes and reflections of world-wide, age-long tragedy. And in the only piece of serious verse he wrote he feels himself haunted by the shadow-presences of friends left behind in the shell-shattered Peninsula, where the poppies bloomed last summer, and will for ever bloom, like gouts of freshly shed blood. Dead voices follow him down the Boyau Nord and rebuke him for deserting his buried mates and he ends :

> We sailed away from Sedd-el-Bahr,
> We are sailing home on leave,
> But this I know—through all the years
> Dead hands will pluck my sleeve.

Unlike Twells Brex, he had the chance of proving his valiancy in the fields of a monstrous mechanical warfare. Yet it is a cleaner task to fight Turks or Germans than to endure the inward embraces of the white-tentacled octopus of cancer. And in peace-time as in war-time the daily humorist has his mission to give us a heartening gaiety, for a moment changing the solemn music of the spheres to a joyous jazz-tune, what time the old, laughing saints clash their croziers together and even smash their haloes like so many plates to add to the merry noise-music.

XXVI

COW DITTIES

LATELY I received a letter from an old friend in the Far West, still located in what is called "'cow country," deploring the fact that the old-fashioned cowboy is extinct, the range having now become a stock-farm run on purely business lines. It may be gathered, however, from his message that the Far-Western genius for picturesque lying has not been altogether extinguished. For example, he says that he met a down-to-date cowboy who said he would prefer a stick of chocolate, when invited to belly up and name it to the bar-tender, changed into a black tail-coat when in town, and boasted that his boss had had the best crop of potatoes in the district last year. Potatoes ! Also he assures me that nearly all the ranching lands in Western Canada have been taken up by film companies and filled with a dense population of actors, actresses, and producers. Which strikes me as a closer approximation to the truth than his previous statement, seeing that (i) Canada is not yet a dry country, and (2) several millions of hard-working people must now be engaged in the production of the cowboy and cowgirl dramas, which are even more popular in Eastern Asia than in the East End of London. If I were riding towards the Albertan foot-hills on a bright September morning and came upon a company of tough-looking fellows, each posed on the hurricane-deck of a savage cayuse, and wearing wild

and woolly chapps and tasselled squaw gloves, and rejoicing in a silver-mounted Mexican saddle, I should look for the paint and artificial hair on their faces, and then glance around for the expensive little lady who was being featured in " The Blue-eyed Girlie of the 2-U Ranch."

It is pleasant to learn, however, from a writer in the Kansas City " Star " that there are still " dogies " to be rounded up and steers to be bunched and cow-boys to do the work in the unfenced lands west of Omaha and south of St. Louis. And, according to this authority on the life of the remote and lonely South-West, the following is an infallible test for ascertaining whether the bunch of husky galoots round a prairie camp-fire are a genuine crowd or merely a gang of movie sharps. You sit in with them, and when the first dram of hard-stuff has been jerked down (there is rye whisky in the South-West despite Prohibition, and always will be) you ask to be favoured with the classic ballad of " The Dying Cowboy." And then, " if there is one there who will clear his pipes with a raucous, sandy cough, fix his expressionless eyes on the far horizon, and fetch forth the strains of that lugubrious ditty in a voice that sounds like the low notes of the lobo crossed upon the wail of an Irish keener, you may be sure that you have with you a genuine buckaroo of the good old days of the open ranges." That doleful song of from twenty to thirty verses comes to me from behind the blue hills of Time (above which gleam the snow-peaks of the stark Rockies), and I can see the singer's fixed, melancholy look as he wallows in the sentimentality of it (like a bison-bull taking a dust-bath in the Banff Park), and I weep psychological tears from the soul's eye at the dripping pathos of the monotonous chant

Oh, bury me not on the lone prair-ee,
Where the wild coyotes will howl over m-ee,
In a narrow grave just six by three,
Oh, bury me not on the lone prair-ec.

• • • • •

Oh, we buried him there on the lone prair-ee,
Where the wild rose blooms and the wind blows free,
Oh, his pale young face nevermore to see—
For we buried him there on the lone prair-ee.

Then there will be an interval for cigarettes and another dram or two (they call 'em " horns " still) and talk about Dempsey's punch, and the lads that went West in France (didn't I sometimes see some of them strolling, rolling down the Strand with their shoulders hunched up and those tell-tale sun-bleached eyes), and the whale of a time Bill had in Paris, France, and then somebody will whistle the tune of " My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" and there will be a long, long silence. You can never get away from that tune in any part of the true West, for it fits in with any kind of liquor, including alkaline water, and with any kind of work, including the turning of a churn-handle to oblige somebody else's best girl. Travelling from Chiswick to Waterloo the other day, I heard the train wheels singing it cheerily and drearily, and the big station had the look of a Western depot, when the train stopped. The Kansas City authority says he once heard a man on a tourist train sing *it* all the way from La Junta to the Needles, and I shouldn't wonder. And it fits in admirably, indeed it did, with the long, lonesome journeys over prairie trails, through dim seas of grasses sighing to no shore, under the many-flickering irony of a starry sky, as the herd rolls on and on and on—especially if you choose the most appropriate of many sets of words :

Last night as I lay on the prairie,
And looked at the stars in the sky,
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Would drift to that sweet by-and-by.

Roll on, roll on,
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on.

Roll on, roll on.
Roll on, little dogies, roll on.

And to this self-same tune is also sung " The Cowboy's Lament," which simply oozes pathos from every line and is even more of a favourite than " The Dying Cowboy." Here are three of a great number of tearful stanzas :

" Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife slowly,
Play the ' Dead March ' as you carry me along ;
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I done wrong.

" I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy,"
These words he did say as I boldly stept by.
" Come sit down-beside me and hear my sad story,
I was shot in the breast and I know I must die.

" Let sixteen gamblers come handle my coffin,
Let sixteen cowboys come sing me a song.
Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I done wrong."

There are, of course, many cowboy songs of a cheery nature. For example, the rough-riding ditty with a buck-jumping chorus beginning :

I woke up in the morning on the old Chisholm trail,
Rope in my hand and a cow by the tail.
Coma to yi, youpy ya, youpy ya,
Coma ti yi, youpy youpy ya.

Or the song in praise of Sam Bass, the Texas road-pirate, of whom it is said and sung :

> Sam used to coin the money and spent it just as free,
> He always drank good whiskey wherever he would be.

But they are nothing like as popular as the pathetic specimens, which will survive even the ravages of the gramophone, now carried by every round-up outfit. Pathos is the stuff best liked by all plain working folk, here as on the high prairies, and anybody who wants to make modern folk-songs must ladle it out with a butter-scoop. Remember that, all ye steep-browed musical sharps !

XXVII

WILLS

I DOUBT the existence of an " English Balzac " at the present moment, but Mr. Galsworthy, who knows his way about the world that smells of property might find a thesis to his mind in a millionaire owned and oppressed by his million. He could be relied upon to hit off the financial and legal aspects of the problem. If Mr. Galsworthy could be persuaded to attempt this thesis his novel or play of " The Will " would have the defects of its qualities. But he would not be content with the ordinary novelist's or playwright's perversions of testamentary law. The Stage-law in regard to Wills has been humorously summarized by a humorist, who, after months of arduous study, discovered two root-principles : (i) That if anybody dies without leaving a will all his property goes to the nearest villain ; and (2) that if, on the other hand, a will exists everything goes to the person who can get possession of it. But no such investigation has been made in the case of novels, in twenty per cent of which a will is the corner-stone of the plot, owing to the immensity of the field. Among the greater masters Dickens was the most prolific will-maker, so well he knew that where there's a will there's a way of so complicating matters that the reader could quote the bold, bad baronet in a mock-melodrama presented some years ago in the Botanic Gardens : " I said the plot would thicken, and it thuck." But I cannot help

thinking he took an undue advantage of this device "Our Mutual Friend," which is as full of old Harmon's wills (each of them supposed by the person discovering it to be the final testament) as Regent's Park is of sandwich-wrappings on Sunday morning. His best will, in my opinion, is a will that never was made; to wit, that of Mr. Spenlow (of Spenlow and Jorkins), who would speak of the non-existent document with "a serenity, a tranquility, a calm, sunset air," altogether worthy of a practitioner at Doctor's Commons, and yet confounded all David Copperfield's hopes by dying intestate. In the days of "Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce," which arose out of a disputed will, there was no greater benefactor to the lawyers than the person who died intestate—unless it was the person who made his own will, concerning whom Lord Neaves (1800-76) sings and says:

He premises his wish and his purpose to save
All disputes among friends when he's lain in the grave;
Then he straightway proceeds more disputes to create
Than a long summer's day would give time to relate.
He writes and erases, he blunders and blots,
He produces such puzzles and Gordian knots,
  That a lawyer intending to frame the deed *ill,*
  Couldn't match the Testator who made his own Will.

You had better pay toll when you take to the road,
Than attempt by a by-way to reach your abode.
You had better employ a Conveyancer's hand
Than encounter the risk that your Will shouldn't stand.
From the broad beaten track when the traveller strays,
He may land in a bog or be lost in a maze;
And the Law, when defied, will revenge itself still
On the man and the woman who made their own Will.

It is sound advice, and it brings me back into the

region of realities. But an entertaining book could be written by a briefless barrister on the Law in regard to Wills and Testaments as expounded pragmatically by the novelists. What a pity Mr. Augustine Birrell does not devote his well-earned leisure to the fulfilment of this tremendous task. I can promise him at least one pertinacious reader. I read him sometimes for his matter, always for his manner.

If, Sir or Madam, the testamentary disposition of your property is not yet in being, call in a lawyer without delay. Do not wait until the natural force of your mind is abated, until your will-power is rusted or broken. Let me quote what Lord Coke said a long time ago : " Few men, pinched with the necessity of death, have a disposing memory. . . . And it is some blemish or touch to a man well esteemed for his wisdom and discretion all his life to leave a troubled estate behind him, amongst his wife, children, or kindred, after his death." It has to be considered that a will is always a criterion of character. As another authority observes : "So surely as the berry indicates the soundness of the root, the flower of the bulb, so does man's last will tell of the goodness or foulness of the heart that conceived it." An old lawyer of my acquaintance, who judged men severely, yet affectionately, seeing even in their weaknesses frequent touches of moral excellence told me once that he was sure the Recording Angel included in every man's *dossier* a copy of his last will and testament. He is dead and gone, the good old man in clerkly side-whiskers ; he left me nothing in his own minutely drawn will (the work of a promising pupil), but before that unhappy event, gave me " Rasselas " as a gift *causa mortis,* carefully explaining the legal sense and

scope of the phrase. I wish I could have understood and remembered all he told me about anciently discussed legal problems, such as the question whether or not a testator has the right to dispose of his own body after death. I suppose the rule that there is no property in a dead body comes into play somehow. But that rule, it appears, has many exceptions. For instance, a question once arose in the Sheriff Court at Glasgow with reference to a human body in the case of poinding. A creditor having poinded the effects of a showman, a suspension was brought upon the ground that the principal exhibit was a dried body, which had been found in one of the guano pits of Peru (ugh !), and that *it* was not a subject of diligence, because *corpus humanum non recipit aestimationem.* But there was no denying that people had paid bawbees to look at the Peruvian mummy, and so it was held that there was property in it which could be attached for the benefit of creditors. I have a dim recollection of reading in American periodical a grimly humorous account of a dispute between an unfee'd surgeon and the heirs of a patient as to the ownership of an amputated leg, which the surgeon had sold for three dollars eighty cents to a friend for dissection. The counsel for the heirs contended that—but why proceed ? He who would resort to the United States for law would go to Hell for strawberry ices. An old and famous problem in this *macabre* mode is the question, mentioned by Sir Thomas Browne in his " Religio Medici," as to whether the maxim *Testament um omne morte consummatum* would apply in the event of a dead man's return through the strait gate of mortality. Could Lazarus, after his resurrection, have reclaimed his property from those to whom he had granted a disposition thereof after his death ? The mightily

learned Puffendorf decided in favour of Lazarus, but his arguments seem to me inconclusive. The issue seems to hinge upon the larger and more remote question, What is death ? And until we know what life is, that question cannot be finally settled. In the course of writing some verses on one of those wars between the microbes of disease and the living body's garrison of leucocytes, compared with which the greatest of Napoleonic battles was a mere pot-house affray, this very difficulty presented itself. When was the victory of the infinitesimal invaders complete ? In the vain hope of squashing the interrogation bacillus I assumed that life sat crowned in the upper chamber of thought and that the seizure of the mystic crown was the end of living :

> But when they touched that crown was heard
> Unbroken silence, and a word
> Unuttered bade the warfare cease—
> O deadly war ! O deathly peace !

You must learn these tricks of rhetorical evasion if you would practise as a fantastical poet.

The subject of wills is full of whimsical by-paths, and I find it hard to keep to the highway of everyday realities. . . . I repeat that it is every person's proper duty to have his or her will made after due deliberation by a competent artist. (Will-making is one of the fine arts of legal practice. Does not Lord Coke advise us that "Wills and the construction of them do more perplex a man than any other learning; and to make a certain construction of them exceedeth *jurisprudentum artem* ! "). I think it was Hazlitt who suggested that some wise and experienced friend should be called in to act as counsellor before the lawyer's indispensable help is required. But it seems to me that one's con-

science and one's legal adviser should be the only coadjutors. In all cases the will should be a secret and secreted instrument. Except when a bequest is in the nature of a post-dated payment for services rendered, the less said about the contents of a will the better, not only for the testator but also for those who are to benefit under its provisions. Indeed, the choice seems to lie between absolute silence and a full and frank declaration of the testator's intentions. Half-measures are fatal; invariably they involve the testator in a network of petty intrigue, a cloud of surreptitious gossip, and so bring about an all-round corruption of character. There is no more pitiable spectacle than that of a wealthy person in the decline of life who has yielded to the temptation of exacting deference by means of allusions to his will, and discovers too late that the obsequiousness with which he is enveloped originates in the desire of relations and friends to get a slice of his estate. He suspects everybody about him of secretly thinking more of his purse than of his personality ; he cannot distinguish between true and false friendship ; all the springs of life's emotions are poisoned for him and, if he be a weak and easily deceived creature, he may commit the crowning blunder of choosing an official " taster "—i.e., a confidential friend on whose judgment as to the intentions of those approaching him he comes to rely implicitly. We have all seen this species of squalid tragedy; for small estates attract parasites, as well as those which run into six figures. In this matter " silence is most noble to the end " ; the wealthy person who never mentions his will is less plagued with legacy-hunters, and has a better chance of keeping his own character uncorrupted. In Rome, whence our form of testamentary disposition is derived, the alternative course

seems to have been generally preferred; the man of wealth openly exacted services from all to whom he intended to leave legacies. The notion that it is indecent to speak of death, or of the things pertaining to death, is a modern evasion of discomfortable actualities, of which the stark-minded Roman, chiefly because he had no fear of his shadowy Hereafter, was quite incapable—at any rate in the days of tense living before the Antonine sentamentality came into vogue. He feared death as little as a practitioner of the Japanese *Bushido* feared suicide, which was to him a regal road out of any tight corner, and he regarded his will as in the first instance a public expression of his character and a monument to his career, and, secondly, as a means of accumulating power and merit during the only real lifetime he could count on confidently—for he had no hope that an eagle would appear out of the smoke and flame of his pyre, as was said to have happened at the fiery obsequies of Augustus in the Campus Martius, and bear his spirit into the midst of the celestial hierarchy. The art of living in the flesh was all-in-all to him—such immortality of fair fame as he desired was merged into the eternity of Rome—*Roma perennis*—and he made his will an instrument woven of mutual understandings for getting the most and best out of life. The bargain between patron and client, the wealthy Roman and the person whose name was down for a legacy in his will, was for their mutual advantage ; the latter knew well enough what services were expected of him, and **what** was to be his reward at the long last. As a rule, no doubt, everything was above board, and the bargain would be faithfully kept. Legacies to the Emperor and influential personages were frequent; thus Virgil left a quarter of his property, which was considerable

(at any rate, for a poet), to Augustus and a twelfth to Maecenas. No doubt these were deferred payments, so to speak, for the priceless boon of Court favour and the valuable consideration of a high-placedfriend. The bequest to the|Emperor was in theory, and not seldom in practice, a subsidy to the State, the eternal existence of which was shadowed forth in the accepted divinity of Caesar. Augustus points out in his will (made in A.D. 13, sixteen months before his death) that the vast sums he had received by testamentary donations had been spent in the service of the State, together with his two paternal patrimonies (that of Caius Octavius, his own father, and of Julius Caesar, his adoptive father). The death duties are the modern equivalent of the Roman's bequest to the Emperor; Virgil, if he had died amongst us to-day, would have paid of his estate, half of which went to his half-brother, an Augustan benevolence to—Sir Robert Home, of course ! The disappointed legacy-hunter was naturally a favourite whipping-boy for the Roman satirist. Yet on the whole the Roman system worked out very well, the Roman mind being what it was. Still for us silence about the contents of wills seems the preferable policy, and as to the best way of making a conscientious will let me once more quote the shrewd and kindly old lawyer already introduced : " When a man is thinking out his will he should try to forget that he is still in the land of the living. Let him imagine himself an angel among angels," " or a devil among devils," said his friend. " Well, that's the other way of looking at it," was the reply, " but even then he should remember that the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman and not likely to approve of unsportsmanlike provisions such as trying to stop a young widow from marrying again, and so on."

The diabolical will, the will which satirizes humanity or punishes expectant persons, is dreary reading as a rule. The will of Philip, fifth Earl of Pembroke, and that of the Marquis d'Aligre, both of which are shrewdly humorous and not merely malignant, are the best in this mode. But all such spiteful documents fall short I should say, of the good Devil's standard of good breeding. The maker of a will speaks the " last word " into the world's ear, and, if he be a gentlemanly villain, will not abuse the privilege. Of course, we must expect to find the ruling passion express itself in a will. A good example is to be found in the will of Henry **VII**, the thriftiest of English monarchs, who desires his executors and survivors to have a special respect, in his funeral, " to the laud and praising of God, the health of our soul, and somewhat to our dignity royal, but avoiding damnable pomp and outrageous superfluities." In all fine wills, from that of Augustus, which we do not possess in its entirety, to that of Cecil Rhodes, the testator's personality has made itself a monument more durable than brass, remembering itself to marble. Of fantastic wills, by far the finest is that which is commonly written of as " the Lunatic's Testament " (or words to that effect), but was actually composed by Mr. Williston Fish, a lawyer, still resident in Chicago. It originally appeared in " Harper's Weekly " in 1898. Herein the testator being of sound mind and disposing memory, distributes the beauty and wonder of the universe among all human beings. Here is one of the clauses :

Item: To lovers, I devise their imaginary world, with whatever they may need, as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music, and aught else by which they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.

It is a charming fantasy. Just as it is the habit of this prosaic essayist to read a little poetry before putting pen to paper, so the person who is about to think out his will might tune his mind to finer usages by first of all reading Mr. Fish's inspiring invention.

XXVIII

KNUR AND SPELL

THIS is a plea for a revival of interest in a fine old-fashioned diversion which is current to-day only on the Northern moors and in certain enclosed grounds such as those at Barnsley and Halif ax—though for all I know to the contrary, they may have been ploughed up into war-time allotments ! It is one of the many games peculiar to a district which have been, or are being, eliminated by the devastating popularity of Soccer, the most monotonous and impersonal of all co-operative pastimes. I should like to see it taken up by hard-hitting golfers and cricketers—perhaps Mr. A. C. M. Croome, who drives as furiously as any grey-haired Jehu, whether a moving cricket ball or a teed, brooding golf ball has to be propelled through the far-listening morn. The Downs would provide breezy spaces for an experimental essay. Knur and spell, be it said in anticipation, mightily ministers to our delight in sending any sort of missile a very long way. Some of the most amazing achievements of this kind are mythical, no doubt. We cannot believe that a certain Caliph ever beat half a mile with a bolt from an arbalest or that a mile could be covered with three flights of an arrow if the archer turned himself into a living arquebus (as John Hodden did in " The White Company ") and used his legs to bend the bow. But there are authentic records of 150-yard drives at cricket and 300-yard drives at golf, while

Bill Ford's record smite of a cricket ball of 600 yards (including the run through a frozen landscape) at Wellington need not be dismissed as a picturesque invention. And it is a true tale that Belcher, the famous P.R. champion, could throw a cricket ball 140 yards with his right hand and 120 yards with his left.

As regards the antiquity of knur and spell, it is at least as old, no doubt, as the words that describe it, or as the marriage thereof, at any rate. But the history of its evolution, though nowhere written in books, is easily read. Like billets, another curious old game, still played in the borderland of Yorkshire and Lancashire, knur and spell is a development of tip-cat, itself one of boyhood's universal games, which needs no description. In the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, as I well remember, tip-cat was played by sides on every piece of waste ground in the towns and villages of the knur-and-spell country. Each player in succession would tip off the cat, hit it as far as possible, then throw down his stick and measure the distance in strides. The individual scores on either side would be added up, and the winning side determined statistically. Not far away from the tip-cat players, in a neighbouring field perhaps, another drove of boys might be seen playing the same kind of statistical match with a rough and ready set of knur-and-spell implements, a clumsy wooden see-saw spell or trap and rude home-made knurs and clubs. With such tools anything over seventy yards was a jolly good hit, especially as you could never be sure how the knur would rise from the trap. The great step forward from this aboriginal form of the game was made when some mechanical genius produced the first spring spell, by means of which the rise could be accurately controlled. Once

this engine was perfected it became worth while to improve the club or " pommel " in every part and to manufacture the pot knurs which are now used instead of the old, easily split and more expensive box-wood balls, themselves the successors of the primeval holly knurs that must have been very hard to come by. Perhaps a longer flight might be secured by using a lighter variant of the latest and most costly type of golf ball.

Thus the evolution of knur and spell from the immemorial tip-cat was duly accomplished. But billets or billeting, a vanquished rival of knur and spell, was much more like the ancestral pastime. The billeting stick consists of a pliant shaft with a cylindrical head spliced on ; a groove is cut in the head to retain the billet, which is, of course, really the tip-cat itself. The idea is to make the billet roll off out of its groove and hit it away as it falls. The expert billeter who does not allow the billet to spin end-w ays when it rolls off the stick can get a flight of 1oo yards and more. But who would not prefer knur and spell, with its records of 304 yards 2 feet with a half-ounce pot knur (by Joe Machin, of Grinnetside, in 1899) and 372 yards 1 foot 8 inches with a wooden knur said to have been made at Lightcliffe, near Halifax, in the same year. There are grave doubts as to the authenticity of the latter feat, but it should be remembered that match-players always have the help of what wind there is, and experts are convinced that the wooden knur " floats " better than the potty in a gale. Anything over ten score (200 yards) is a good strike in ordinary circumstances.

The pot knur is a white porcelain sphere weighing half an ounce and rather less than an inch in diameter. If it splits when struck the player has another shot.

The pommel, or club, which is from four feet to four feet six inches in length, is now a very highly developed affair. The shaft, which is thinner and more flexible than that of any golf driver, is of ash, with a string handgrip. The head, which is spliced on, and has the shape of a small bottle flattened on the striking side, is of beech faced with maple, and weighs by itself from four ounces to five ounces. The spell, or trap, has an outer frame (with a small spirit-level attached to it) of metal, to which a spring is firmly attached; on the upper end of the spring is the little cup in which the knur is placed, the same end of the spring being pulled down to the top of a metal upright, where it is held by a catch which can be released by touching a trigger behind. Near the fixed foot the spring passes through a collar with a screw, which is turned to regulate the throw. When *in* use the spell is securely spiked down on a piece of ground levelled with the spade and chosen so that the player may be hitting down the wind. Then the course is marked out in intervals of twenty yards or " scores " so as to facilitate the measuring of each knock.

Then comes the intricate business of finding the player's standpoint. First of all, the spring of the spell is carefully adjusted (by manipulating the screw at the collar) until the throw is a certain distance, say, six feet, down the course, and a " potty " is embedded exactly where that in the cup would always fall if not struck. Then comes in the use of a most important piece of string, the length of which is an expression of the player's personal equation, being determined in reference to the length of his stroke, etc., by a long experience. This string has a loop at one end and a hook at the other ; when the hook is placed in the loop the endless band thus formed is placed about the fixed

spell and the embedded potty and drawn out until it forms a right angle), which, as every mathematician knows, can only be done in one way. The player, if he stand to his work as a right-handed cricketer does, places his right foot firmly against a peg driven into the ground at the third angle of the triangle. He then tries a rise or two without hitting to see that everything is in order and get his eye in. Finally, after a vigorous waggle, he touches the trigger, lifts his club up and back in a bold sweep, takes a step forward, and hits the ball when it is in the middle of its flight or thereabouts.

Naturally, a good eye and a good wrist and a large amount of careful practice (haphazard hitting is worse than useless) are required to make even a fair second-rate player. The first-rate knur-and-spell artist is born, not made, or, rather, he is both born and made—long experience having perfected his natural gifts. But even a poor performer gets a perfect satisfaction from the sensation, softand thrilling as the first kiss, of a perfectly executed drive.

XXIX

THE UNKNOWN MUSE

IN the highways and by-ways of poetry all that we see and hear, howsoever mysterious and majestical, is like Lear's hand in that it smells of mortality. The greatest poets of all time—Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth—are but men among men, or, if it comes to that, men among deities created in their own image. It is for this very reason, perhaps, that they keep the loftiest places in the remembrance of mankind. Because they remain our fellow-mortals even when they achieve that last secret of a triumphant style which Dante describes when he defines the *dolce stil nuovo,* they are nearer to us and dearer than the few lesser poets, very few indeed, who have somehow escaped from this sublunary sphere of—

> . . . wood, brick, stone, this ring
> Of the rueful neighbours,

and found the unseen abiding-place of the Unknown Muse and received from her the singing-robe of other-worldliness. It is a strange road thither; all the strangeness at the heart of all beauty shines about it, before and behind, above and below. The first who ever travelled that way has given us a metaphorical chart of it in an old and wonderful ballad :

O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded thro' rivers aboon the knee ;
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.
It was mirk, mirk night, and there was nae stern light,
And they waded thro' red blude to the knee ;
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
Rins thro' the springs o' that countrie.

The Douglas also had a glimpse of the realms of the Unknown Muse when, on the night before his death-in-victory, he dreamed " a wearie dream, beyond the Isle of Skye " and Keats too, when he looked through :

. . . magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,

or heard " elfin storms . . . of haggard seeming " afar, or had his sad vision of " La Belle Dame sans Merci." Shelley, " hidden in the light of thought," often discerned those mystical meadows, full of flowers unknown to earth, and Blake pitched his wandering tent at the boundary thereof.

It is only in earthly similitudes—as yet—that poets have been able to communicate their visions or dreams or nightmares of this land exalted beyond the flaming walls of this prison-world of ours. Yet some of the few pictures they have given us are so strangely beautiful as to be poems altogether apart—not to be surpassed in haunting impressiveness and momentous charm until intuition, still-born in nearly all of us and but newly-born in the rest, finds its tongue and learns the use of it. Each vague picture is no more than a painted parable :

Where more is meant than meets the eye

and it is coloured, brightly or in dismal hues, by the over-ruling mood of the maker. Coleridge, that sombre and perplexed soul, seeking human nature in the marginal notes of scholiasts, found his imagery in the enemy ocean, the whole of its expanse haunted by a single sin and full of malignant and beneficent voices. And to him the Unknown Muse appeaVed in aspects of horror :

> Her lips were red, her looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold ;
> Her skin was white as leprosy,
> The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
> Who thicks man's blood with cold.

How strangely different from the lady bright that came riding down by the Eildon Tree, fair and fortunate as the Queen of Heaven in the eager eyes of Thomas the Rhymer :

> Her skirt was o' the grass-green silk,
> Her mantle o' the velvet fyne,
> At ilka tett of her horse's mane
> Hang fifty siller bells and nine.

But never to the unimagined truth and to the unimaginable beauty of it is the land as the Ettrick Shepherd saw it through the soul's eye of Kilmeny :

> But to sing the sights Kilmeny saw,
> So far surpassing Nature's law,
> The singer's voice wad sink away,
> And the string of his harp wad cease to play.
> But she saw till the sorrows of man were bye,
> And all was love and harmony ;
> Till the stars of heaven fell calmly away,
> Like flakes of snaw on a wintry day.

Truly, the life of such as Kilmeny is but a baptism in the waters of living. Others have seen the land of the Unknown Muse as Heaven or as Hell; each according to the burden of earthly joyousness or earthly misery he bore to the end of the viewless path. James Thomson (B.V.), that Heine on crutches, saw it as the City of Dreadful Night, as a darker and more daunting symbol than any he had seen in his actual underworld of the hopelessness so poignantly expressed in this stanza of his masterpiece :

> O length of the intolerable hours,
> O nights that are as aeons of slow pain,
> O Time, too ample for our vital powers,
> O Life, whose woeful vanities remain
> Immutable for all of all our legions
> Through all the centuries and in all the regions,
> Not of your speed and variance *we* complain.

But Dante Gabriel Rossetti, having heaven in his deep mind as he remembered his brief happiness with the beautiful woman whose face is part for ever of our heritage of pictured art, set forth his vision in the most triumphant effort—as yet—to communicate incommunicable wonders. His " Blessed Damozel" has been called pastoralism *in excelsis.* But it is the most majestic parable of the land of wonderment which has been drawn by any master of music and colour :

> It lies from Heaven across the flood
> Of ether, as a bridge.
> Beneath, the tides of day and night
> With flame and blackness ridge
> The void, as low as where this earth
> Spins like a fretful midge.

From the fixt lull of Heaven, she saw
  Time, like a pulse, shake fierce
Through all the worlds.

Metaphors more magnificent are not to be found in all the poems inspired by the Unknown Muse in those whose hearts are shaken out of everyday ease by the tiny, inarticulate prophecies which beset us everywhere and everywhen—even in the grave, as Mr. W. B. Yeats has foretold :

He stood among a crowd at Drumahair ;
  His heart hung all upon a silken dress,
  And he had known at last some tenderness,
Before earth made of him her sleepy care ;
But when a man poured fish into a pile,
  It seemed they raised their little silver heads,
  And sang how day a Druid twilight sheds
Upon a dim, green, well-beloved isle,
Where people love beside star-laden seas ;
  How Time may never mar their faery vows
  Under the woven roofs of quicken boughs :
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

Is this land in the past or in the future ? What a foolish question. The Unknown Muse dwells where Time is not; as you will be sure if you travel by a shorter but steeper road (there is another road) than by stepping-stones of poetic similitudes to her dread abiding place. You go by the low road, and I by the high road, and we shall arrive together and lay down the burden of aching egoism under which our backs have been bowed through uncounted generations.

XXX

'ENGLISH FOLK-SONGS

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TO most of us the first revelation of England's wealth of folk-music must have seemed an incredible thing ; a contradiction of the saying, *securus judical orbis terrarurn,* seeing that all the authorities, living or dead, at home as well as abroad, had agreed to denounce the English folk as non-musical. Dr. Burney's statement in his History of Music, a work highly valued a century ago, to the effect that " the Turks had a limited number of tunes, to which the poets of their country have contrived to write for ages, and the vocal music of our countrymen seems long ago to have been equally circumscribed/' is an early expression of a foolish, fallacious belief which the foreign art critic has always done his best to encourage. " How can you expect to have a national school of great composers ? " said a German critic to me at Bayreuth many years ago, " when your nation has no *Volkslieder to* build on ? " He was a just-minded person, and if I had been able to answer him, would have faithfully considered my answer. That the art-music of Germany and of all other Continental countries has a basis of folk-song is universally admitted. Wagner himself insists on it again and again. In Russia and in Norway, again, national schools of composition and composers of the first magnitude have

appeared within the memory of the living, and nobody can deny that Glinka and Grieg derived their inspirations and aspirations directly from the folk-songs of their own countries. On the other hand, England had not a single composer, even of second rank, and since the day of Purcell had, until quite recently, produced hardly any music which could be said to be idiomatically English. And, seeing how the ears of the EngUsh people were possessed by the unspeakable products of the cheap music-hall, how could anybody for a moment believe that there still survived, in nooks and corners of our ancient country-side, a treasury of authentic folk-music equal in value to that of Germany or any other European country ? Yet that treasury existed, and trained collectors had already begun, not a moment too soon, to rescue its beauties from oblivion.

A few years later this truth was revealed to me in a beautiful garden on the South Coast, where, so I was told, a company of London workgirls and little children were entertaining their friends. Some of those who entered the garden that afternoon had, for the first time in their lives, the freedom of fairyland, the English fairyland; their souls put on the green livery of the only Good People. The songs and their singers, the dances and those who danced them—all seemed to be emanations from the embowered lawn which was the scene of this pageant of white voices and woven gestures conjured out of the half-forgotten past—only half-forgotten, because none of us has altogether lost the ancestral memory of " merrie England " and the ancestral hopefulness that goes with it. There was morris dancing by fair fresh maidens in the old simple dress of the countryside, bearing small staves or waving white handkerchiefs in either hand. They wore tiny tinkling bells on their

trim ankles, and their manners towards one another were as pretty as their dancing. Seeing these dancers, I fully understood the saying of the old, much-travelled sailor, who left Somerset so many years ago to follow the sea : " This is the dancing of my heart, and I would not have missed the sight for two big apples." Then there were folk-songs of many kinds, the artlessness of the singing being an ancestral art. Then examples were given of the delightful action-songs, in which mowing the barley and other rustic pursuits—half work, half play, and all good-fellowship—are made the choral background of a simple love story. A girl with the tanned complexion and black hair (bound in a scarlet kerchief) of the dead but undying nut-brown maid, sang her confession of love ; there were faint fluctuating colours in her voice, a rainbow of sound on thought of tears, and yet not a touch of the artist's self-consciousness in her manner. Artifice herself sat within arm's length of me in a pretty, pale incarnation, and she praised the solo singer, and at the end gave her a gift of heather. These simple, fragrant things touched her heart, I think, with a sense of something she had lost or never found, she knew not what. Once or twice her eyes seemed too bright to be tearless.

These songs and dance tunes haunted me for many a day. They were utterly unlike the German or Scandinavian folk-melodies or the traditional French airs still sung by the *habitant* or small farmer of Quebec, though they have long since been forgotten in his mother-France. With these and other ahen bodies of folk-music I was fairly well acquainted, and so it was clear from the first that these newly-discovered tunes were things apart, and as essentially English as the words to which they had been so happily wedded

And, strange to say, their beauty seemed somehow familiar; just as the thought comes to a traveller that he has been there before in a place hitherto unvisited, so it was borne in on me that I had heard them all, had sung them myself, once upon a time. I had not heard them before ; but some of my ancestors had sung them, no doubt of it, in the far-off past that was theirs, and is now a part of myself. Nearly everybody, I find, when he or she hears the English folk-songs for the first time, is presently perturbed with the same feeling of familiarity ; and that a reality lies beyond it is manifest from the fact that everybody, but especially children, get them by heart with hardly any effort, and with no sense whatever that they are engaged in task-work. Every teacher who has introduced English folk-music into a school is a witness to the truth of these statements ; when a song is taught to a class, in a week every pupil knows it, and, what is more, sings it in his playtime.

But how came it about that the treasures of English folk-music were undiscovered until the twentieth century ? It is so strange that the country parson, who knows his parish and parishioners so well as a rule, and such keen-eyed novelists as Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose books are a kind of illuminated social history, should have overlooked such precious things. But it must be remembered that folk-music, the secret possession of unlettered persons, is only to be found by those who go to look for it specially, who know what they are seeking and how to find it. " The clapperings of the steam binder," wrote a country parson who has done much for the revival, " have killed it from the harvest-field; the board schoolmaster, a perfect Herod among the innocents, slew it in the children by his crusade against all dialect but

his own, and all poems except Casabianca (type of the legal spirit). The purveyors of cheap harmonies, singing evangelists with their unspeakable songs and solos, choir-masters with their doggerel for Sunday and their clap-trap for the penny-reading—all prey upon the persecuted and forsaken remnant. Folk-song, unknown in the drawing-room, hunted out of the school, chased by the chapel deacons, derided by the middle classes, and despised by those who have been uneducated into the three R's, takes refuge in the fastnesses of tap-rooms, poor cottages, and outlying hamlets. It harbours in the heathen kingdoms and the wilder parts. It is a treasure to be sought and found in nooks and corners, underneath much mental and some moral lumber. It comes out very shyly, late at night, and is heard when the gentry have gone home to bed, when the barrack-room has exhausted its music-hall menu." Yet, thanks be to the wary wisdom of Mr. Cecil Sharp (whose *flair* amounts to genius) and other skilled investigators, the quest of the English folk-song has been so successfully carried out in the last few years that we have now on record thousands of tunes, and may hope to see our collection greatly increased as the search is extended throughout the country. For, seeing that the earliest fruits of rediscovery are now being sung in schools and at concerts all over the country, the folk-singer is no longer ashamed and afraid to come into the light of day, and the collector's task is much easier than it was ten years ago.

Not only in rural England, but also in remote regions of Anglo-Saxondom beyond the seas, a skilful search is still certain to be rewarded. The traditional English songs are still sung at camp-fires in the Canadian fur-traders' vast demesnes (the Chicago music-hall ditty

has not yet crossed the Laurentian boulder-wall that marks the southern limit of the Glacial Age and the northern boundary of agricultural settlement), and among the mountaineers of Kentucky, and here and there *in* the fastnesses of the Southern States. Newfoundland, which is really a sea-girt Pevon, must be very rich in this species of treasure trove. As I know well the fishermen of the Grand Banks, men who have been out of touch with civilization for two centuries and more, still sing ballads and chanties and coasting rhymes of their ancestral West Country. One of them, who saw his great-grandfather and two others from Bideford, in Devon, " riding through the night-mist on a girt wave and warming themselves in the moonlight/' knew enough of them to last the whole of a fishing season, so his shipmates declared.

Generally speaking, the words of our English folk-songs are not as old as the melodies. Or, to be more accurate, the former have been adapted—corrupted if you will—to suit the tastes of successive generations, until little or nothing is left of the original. Where a refrain of more or less meaningless sound such as:

> Line, twine, the willow, and the dee,
> Sing ivy leaf, sweet William, and thyme,
> Hey Deny Down,
> To my oor, bag boor, bag nigger, bag waller and bantabaloo,

is used, which is often the case, it may be a fragment of the earliest form of words, the words that were invented many centuries ago to fit the modal tune. We know that the refrains of Danish folk-songs are often derived from much older ballads, and that the old French poets frequently inserted lines from ancient ditties as refrains. In some of the meaningless but musical sequences of syllables in our traditional poetry

I seem to catch an echo of Norman-French hunting-cries or of familiar sentences of Monastic Latin, or of the English that was spoken before the Norman Conquest. It might be worth while for somebody more learned than I am in the making of our noble language to follow up this clue. The third refrain given above is thought by some authorities to be a corruption of the burden of a Druid song or hymn, signifying : " Let us away to the Green Oak," a burden which the children of the English conquerors might have learnt from their Celtic subjects. The fourth refrain, a portentous suggestion of flat-footed syllables, is weird enough to serve as a " yell " of an American college. It is taken from the old song of " Midsummer Fair," from which the universally popular ditty of " Widdicombe Fair " was derived by putting in place of the refrain a list of local worthies, living at the time, no doubt, but long since lapsed into the good Devon earth. No better illustration could be given of the way in which the singers of folk-songs have, in all ages, altered the words thereof to get the turn of the market, so to speak, and of their very human motives for so doing. Such changes made for a renewal of popularity, they helped to convince the hearer that he was listening to a true tale. After all, the songs were the property of the people who sang them, and they had a right to make such alterations from time to time as seemed proper and profitable. An old song which nobody cared to hear would have been a mere curio, resembling in its uselessness the antique pots which are locked up in the collector's cupboards instead of being allowed to do the work for which they were designed. There is a tendency to-day in certain quarters to insist on a slavish adherence to tradition in the performance of morris dances, etc. We must

be on our guard against the academic zeal which, here as elsewhere, would kill the spirit to keep the letter. Let the people be at liberty to change the old dances as they list; otherwise they will not make new ones. One or two of the dead-and-gone singers, tuneful fellows, who trudged from tavern to tavern to sing for their suppers, may have had a touch of the poetical instinct possessed by Burns, whose finest lyrics are the quintessence of many traditional love-songs. But it is to be feared, alas ! that *it* was seldom, indeed, that a folk-singer arose who could " edit" his material so as to make out of other men's roses his own attar of roses. It is not often that we catch as in the lines:

> A farmer's son so sweet,
> A-keeping of his sheep,
> So careless fell asleep,
> While his lambs were playing—

the subtle cadences of Theocritus or Herrick, or any other master of Arcadian word-music. The sad truth is that the broadside and the so-called " garland " (the latter a booklet of three or four pages), which appeared not long after the invention of printing, were agencies of universal corruption. They were produced by the hacks of the aboriginal Grub-street, who garbled and vulgarized the fine old songs at their own unsweet will, and were hawked about the country-side by pedlars and showmen . . . so that only those who could not read, a numerous company after all, had any chance of escaping the chill penury of the literary convention. As every student of ballads knows too well, the broadside versions are invariably the feeblest and most corrupt. So that it may be said of English folk-poetry in general (there are exceptions,

of course), that it is the matter rather than the manner that is interesting and instructive. If only England had had a Walter Scott and a Burns of her own, there must have been a very different tale to tell. For nearly all the ballads and traditional songs preserved by the famous Scottish remembrancers were as much England's property as Scotland's ; more so, indeed, since not only were they all familiar fireside joys even in the furthest South, but they also kept their English titles when they crossed the Border.

As it exists to-day English folk-poetry is a vast and unkempt wilderness of literature, where the wild flowers of imagination are widely scattered and often as difficult to find—for all that, they are numerous enough—as the blue bells on a Lancashire moor. Yet the perfume and purple flush (as of heather in bloom) of England's essential vitality is over it all; out of its shadowy and innumerable acres blows a wholesome and heartening breeze to clear the brain of all the Celtic hypocrisies. Read the traditional ballads and songs of the English country-side—there are thousands of them—and you will know more about the inner life of "Merrie England" than any of the professed historians. You will hold in your hand the heart of that mighty and magnanimous race, which lived on, and by, and for the land, and was the dayspring of England's strength in the past—that free-born peasantry, the like of which existed nowhere in mediaeval Europe. You will learn little of the manners and customs of the ancient nobility which, to do it justice, never regarded itself as belonging to a superhuman order of creation, as the French *noblesse* did ; and you will hear nothing at all of the great self-centred middle class, which has been the dominant power in England since the days of the Protectorate, and has long since

driven the " common people " into the vast industrial towns.

Love, the poor man's feast, is the chief theme of English folk-songs. As a rule *it* is love at first sight, an open-air adventure, something between a sentiment and a passion, clean without reticence, humble, *it* may be, but fearless, and always looking *to* marriage and the procreation of children as inevitable ends. Always it is a May-day mood ; ever so many of the love-ballads and love-songs begin with the line :

> As I went out one May morning,

or its equivalent. The girl who appears in the second verse is a blithe handsome creature, not given to staying indoors, and neat in her attire as a new pin. Says he, for example :

> O, where are you going to my pretty dear,
> With your red rosie cheeks and your coal-black hair ?

And the reply is :

> I'm going a-milking, kind sir, she answered me,
> And 'tis dabbling in the dew makes the milkmaids fair.

Often it happens that the story of the wooing is too outspoken to be set down in print; as an old rustic said to a she-collector of folk-ditties, " Some of 'em be too clumsy-like for girls to hear." Young as she is, the maiden has long desired a lover :

> " Sixteen, pretty maid ! You are young for to marry,
> I'll leave you other four years to tarry."
> " You speak like a man without any skill;
> Four years I've been single against my own will."

The backward wooer, who does not gather kisses while he may, is prettily flouted :

> We have a flower in our garden,
> We call it Marygold ;
> And if you will not when you may,
> You shall not when you wolde.

Having given her hand to a lover, the maiden is restless at night for thinking of the fickleness of young men. But the morning brings back her trusting kindness :

> She dried her eyes and the gay sun shone,
> And the world grew green in the blue,
> For the last of the foggy dew was gone,
> The last of the foggy dew.
> But love was there in the mist and shine,
> The old love, wonder and new,
> O fie, pretty maid, to let eyes like thine
> Be dimmed by the foggy dew, dew, dew,
> By fear of the foggy dew.

If she be obdurate, a suitable gift will sometimes soften her heart. In the earliest version of the " Keys of Heaven," a more sentimental form of which was so delightfully sung by Madame Yvette Guilbert (such songs are to be said rather than sung) the lady says at last:

> O, Sir, I will accept of you
> A broidered silken gownd,
> With nine yards a-drooping
> And trailing on the ground :
> Then I will be your joy, your sweet and only dear,
> And walk along with you anywhere.

There is passion behind it all, no doubt; though it

will be necessary to distil the colours and odours from half a dozen of these songs to get a drop of the sweet, authentic anguish. The sincerity of the lover's heart is revealed *in* such lines as :

> I'd rather rest on a true love's breast
> Than any other where. •
> For I am thine, and thou art mine :
> No man shall uncomfort thee.

But it is only when the one or the other meets with an untimely death that the lyric cry of passion is heard. She, finding the body of her devoted sailor-lover on the lonely beach, cries aloud :

> O what now are to thee, my love, these breasts I beat!
> And what joy in this golden hair I loose at thy feet!

And he, meeting the corse of his true love borne to the churchyard, is eloquent in works rather than words, after the Englishman's fashion :

> Six times he kissed her red rosy lips,
> Nine times he kissed her chin,
> Ten times he kissed her snowy, snowy breast
> Where love did enter in.

The old repining for youth lost and the love-time gone by is often overheard in the sadder songs, which are not numerous:

> But the time is gone and past, my love, that you and I have seen ;
> The trees they do grow high and the leaves they do grow green.

Constancy is, of all virtues, the most highly praised in these songs ; the true lover will marry his true love

even out of a madhouse, the most evil of all places to the mediaeval mind, which thought madness was a form of possession by devils coming and going in the House of Life.

Abroad as I was walking one morning in the spring,
I heard a maid in Bedlam, so sweetly she did sing ;
Her chains she rattled in her hands, and always so sang she :
I love my love because I know my love loved mc.

Yet inconstancy is inevitable, and the maid forsaken broods on her sad lot and finds pity for all distress, even that of inanimate things in her full heart. Seeing the busy mowers, she thinks :

I could wish them have compassion on the flower when it dies.

Yet it is seldom that she dies of a broken heart or kills herself for love. Thus Mistress Fleetwood Habergam (*circa* 1689), who had a spendthrift and faithless husband, ends her lamentation with the lines :

Come, all you false young men,
Do not leave me here to complain ;
For the grass that has oftentimes been trampled under foot,
Give it time, it will rise up again.

Probably she found the consolation she desired; for the lover in English folk-poetry, though he prefers a free maid in her 'teens, does not object to marrying one who has been (to quote a quaint, rustical phrase) " a good widow to her husband," provided she comes up to the description :

She is proper stout and tall,
Her fingers long and small,
She's a comely dame withal,
She's a brisk young widow.

The true Englishman is a lusty lover. But he keeps his head, if he loses his heart; his natural common sense survives the death of his first love or even the departure of his last love.

There is very little history of a definite kind and no politics at all in English folk-poetry. The patriotic song is seldom or never met with; when wars by land or by sea are mentioned they are nearly always discomfortable incidents in the story of a soldier's or a sailor's wooing. The sentiment of the stanza :

O cursed were the cruel wars that ever they should rise,
And out of Merrie England press many lads likewise !
They pressed young Harry from me, likewise my brothers three
And sent them to the wars in High Germany,

faithfully reflects popular opinion of the dynastic wars, meaningless to the common people, which made the names of Marlborough and other famous generals. Clearly the makers of the folk-songs were lacking in martial ardour, unless it was a question of fighting on the high seas. Then, indeed, they sing a martial strain, and glorify the nation's heroes, Benbow and the rest:

The surgeon dressed his wounds, Benbow cries, Benbow cries,
The surgeon dressed his wounds, Benbow cries,
Let a cradle now in haste on the quarterdeck be placed
That the enemy I may face, till I dies, till I dies.

In a few of the sea-songs the pirate ship appears and is sunk with all hands by the King's man-o'-war, so that

The ship it was their coffin, and their grave it was the sea,
A-sailing down all on the coasts of High Barbary.

These lines probably refer to the Algerian corsairs, whose daring was reported in the most remote villages. The greatest of our pirates, Captain John Ward, for example, made Tunis his head-quarters. The sailor in love is a favourite theme; his rival, generally a tailor, if only for the sake of the rhyme, is always cut out at the last moment. Adventurous living is a common theme ; the high-placed lady who marries a rover or goes off with the gipsies is a great favourite. She hears the strange sweet singing of the Egyptians :

> One sang high, and one sang low,
> And the other sang bonny, bonny Biscay O !

and is off to live between the stars and the flowers, forsaking the castle and the circumstantial pomp in which she has been immured :

> It was late last night when my Lord came home,
> Enquiring for his a-lady, O !
> The servants said, on every hand :
> She's gone with the Wraggle Taggle gipsies, O !

The rich merchant's daughter, who is also cooped up in a gilded cage, is often captured by some idle, easy-going young fellow who follows a roving trade. Such was the luck of the broomseller's son, who worked for his niggardly father:

> There was an old man and he lived in the West,
> And his trade was a-cutting of broom, green broom ;
> He had but one son, and his name it was John,
> And he lied a-bed till 'twas noon, high noon.

But the highwaymen of whom it could be said and sung

A brace of loaded pistols he did carry night and day ;
He never robbed a poor man all on the King's highway.

was the best-loved adventurer of all; the country folk having done their utmost to preyent his capture by the hue-and-cry, attended his execution and bought his last confession (a black-edged broadside, of which the *In Memoriam* cards, sold after great football matches, are lineal descendants) and deplored the loss of a constant friend, always good for a guinea in bad times, with a few tears of melody. Rather rollicking tunes, sometimes ; the Rogues' March on the drums, which accompanied malefactors to the gallows, throbs in them as often as not.

Poaching songs are more common than the hunting ditties which did not greatly interest poor men who went on shank's nag and worked while their masters followed the hounds. Even the mere footpad crept into English folk-poetry; being forced to justify his taking off with a certain grim humour :

Up the ladder I did grope, that's no joke, that's no joke,
Up the ladder I did grope, that's no joke;
Up the ladder I did grope, and the hangman spread tho rope,
O, but never a word said I coming down.

These lines are from the famous monologue of " Jack Hall, Chimney Sweep," which was garbled and coarsened by a London low comedian into the obscene song which aroused Colonel Newcome's wrath, and was sung to the horror of a pious Colonel, by a regiment going into action in one of Mr. Kipling's short stories.

Many folk-songs deal with the various phases of the farmer's life, and some of them are full of a quiet glee, a deep content, at the sight of well-fed stock and fields

of ripening grain. What could be more restful than this picture of rural felicity ?

> How delightful to see,
> In those evenings in spring,
> The sheep going home to the fold ;
> The nraster does sing
> As he views everything,
> And his dog goes before him where told.

The feasts of the year are duly celebrated, and the farmer and his wife are musically entreated *to* be bountiful:

> O, master and mistress, if so be you please
> Pray set out on your table your white loaf and your cheese,
> And put forth your roast beef, your porrops, and your pies.

This they do cheerfully if the apple harvest has been good, if the springtide carolling before the trees—

> But blossom, bloom and bear, ready to tear,
> So that we shall have apples and cider next year,
> Hat-fulls, cap-fulls, three-bushel bag-fulls,
> Little heap under stairs, cider running out gutter-holes,

has been heard in that other orchard-close where the lives of men blossom again in rose-white splendour. But the themes of our folk-poetry are so numerous that an end must be made of this small anthology. There are songs for all church festivals and feasts, mournful ballads of the life beyond the grave and heaven or hell to come, songs of faery, tales of the hatred of Jewry, and among other varieties not a few of the ditties, tests of the singer's memory, which are built up and unbuilt again line by line. Let a speci-

men of the last-named be given in conclusion. It is very old and rather puzzling in parts :

Twelve are the twelve apostles,
Eleven are the keys of heaven.
And ten are the ten commandments.
Nine are the nine that brightly shine,
And eight are the eight commanders.
Seven are the seven stars in the sky,
And six are the six broad waiters.
Five are the rlamboys under the boat,
And four are the gospel-makers.
Three of them are thrivers,
And two and two are lily-white babes a-clothed all in green OI
Dne and one is all alone and evermore shall be so.

Nobody seems to know who the eight " commanders " were or what is meant by the " six broad waiters " or the " flamboys under the boat " or the three " thrivers."

Thus it will be seen that the words of English folk-song are often poetical (though not on the plane of the art-poet's thunders and splendours) and nearly always charged with the life and atmosphere of an England that has long ago vanished. Moreover, even if the sense of the words be comparatively modern, the metrical form is as old as the tune that determines it. The former may have been so often altered and adapted that, as with the antique chair of the anecdote, not a scrap of the original material had been left.

Yet the latter remains in its ancient boldness and simplicity, and, as students of English prosody must admit, as obviously older than the lyrical forms used by the Elizabethan poets, as the tune is more ancient than the earliest melodies expressed in terms major or minor Here is a point which has been neglected

by those who have vindicated the antiquity of the true English folk-tunes.[1] These tunes, wild flowers of music as they are, were invariably cast in the modes ; and the modes went out of fashion, as we know, early in the seventeenth century, when the modern system of major and minor scales took their place, though the change was*at first expressed in a code of unwritten laws, the existence of which caused the music of the period to be styled *musica ficta.* The majority of our English folk-tunes, two-thirds or so, are in the ionian or major mode ; which was so popular that ecclesiastical musicians called *it* the *modus lascivus,* and would not allow *it* to be used in church music. One of the earliest of all folk-tunes of this or any other country, the famous " Sumer is icumen in," is cast in this mode. It is wrong, therefore, to attribute its popularity to the influence of modern art-music. Indeed, that influence has always counted for very much more with the folk-singers of Continental countries than with those of England; as appears from the preponderance of aeolian over minor airs in English folk-music, a preponderance which distinguishes *it* from any other European body of traditional music. If an unknown folk-song were sung to me without words, and it was in the minor, I should say that it was not English without hesitation ; for it would be very long odds that my judgment were correct even if—an unlikely contingency—it was lacking in other characteristics of the place of origin. Next to those in the ionian mode the mixolydian airs are most common in English folk-music; dorian and aeolian are slightly less numerous. But, not to go too deeply into technicalities unfamiliar to the average

[1] **In all that follows I can but repeat the doctrine of Mr. Cecil Sharp, whose profound knowledge of all such matters is a national possession.**

musician (who, I regret to say, very seldom knows much about the history of his art), the following are the chief characteristics of English folk-tunes, according to Mr. Cecil Sharp :

(i) They do not modulate. In mixolydian and dorian airs, however, the mode is sometimes changed by the inflection of the third, which has been attributed to the influence of church music. But a better explanation of this fact has been given. It has been observed that the English folk-singer's major third is never so sharp as in the tempered modern scale and is often so flat that it cannot be distinguished from the modern minor third. (It is sometimes a neutral third, like the interval between the cuckoo's two notes in late spring. Other illustrations could be given, I think, from familiar English bird-songs which always seem to me survivals of the ancient Greek music and have, alas ! been grossly garbled by the art-musicians who have pretended to record their airs or introduced them into their symphonies. Thrushes, blackbirds, nightingales, skylarks, etc., are the oldest folk-singers of all and the worst-treated of all by the modern musician.) And since the third of the scale is the only note by which the dorian may be distinguished from the mixolydian (it is minor in the former, major in the latter) the folk-singer, by flattening it or sharpening it at his wish, may bring about a change of mode. He could not do this in any of the other modes. (2) They are non-harmonic, having been invented by those who had not a developed sense of harmony. (3) They often contain bars of irregular length. (4) They often employ five- and seven-time measures. (5) Finally, the English folk-melodies are very frequently distinguished from those of Continental countries by their

ample compass, surprising width of intervals, and bold melodic curves. Why is this ? Because the English voice, as a rule, has a wider compass and more power of leaping than the German or the French voices, the property of racial types deprived of the advantage of living in England, which, after all, has the most equable and kindliest climate in the world. For one pretty girl you meet in Berlin or Paris you meet three in London, and in the computation of fine, ample, fluent, mellow voices, male or female, we have a still greater advantage.

The true English folk-tunes must not, of course, be confounded with what are commonly known as " Old English " airs. Like the sea-songs written by Dibden to the order of the Admiralty, anxious to encourage recruiting for the Navy, and the town-ditties of the nearer past, such as " The Lass of Richmond Hill," the majority of the latter are the compositions of the art-musician. Many of them, however, are based on folk-tunes or are perversions of the same made to fit in with the musical fashions of the age in which the collector lived and earned his living. Thus a greater number of the airs in the ballad operas of the eighteenth century are derived from folk-tunes which have been garbled into a kind of art-music that resembles nothing so much as the wired flowers with a back-piece of cardboard in the florist's shops, innocent lives tortured to make a townsman's button-hole. These perversions were popular in the towns, never in the quiet, all-considering countryside. In " The Beggars' Opera " the first and best known of such works, the majority of the sixty-nine airs have the titles of actual folk-songs; if Gay and Pepusch, the German musician who helped him, had only faithfully transcribed the modal melodies, they would have been

entitled to our undying gratitude. Others would have followed their examples of faithfulness, and the task of recording our folk-songs might have been accomplished more than a century ago, with the result'that we might have seen our National School of Composition established long ago and escaped the domination of the Benedicts and Costas and the makers of low-grade oratorios who dominated English music in the nineteenth century. *Dis aliter visum* : it was fated that the task of collection should be usurped by the delver in libraries, who never thought of going into the country to find what he sought. The late William Chappell was a fair example of those unenlightened busybodies; he actually believed that the folk-tunes found by the pioneers of latter-day research were merely corrupt versions of printed pieces. Yet any Continental student of the history of folk-song could have told him that, nine times out of ten, the printed copy is a perversion of the unwritten melody. However, we need no longer repine, seeing that we have now, later even than the eleventh hour, come into our heritage of truly national music by a species of undeserved miracle. And, to judge by some of the work of our young composers—a very different breed from the hack-writers of the Victorian Age—there is reason to hope that reverent use will be made of these innumerable and priceless heirlooms. The example of Beethoven rather than of Brahms must be followed in dealing with modal airs. The former was keenly alive to the atmosphere and significance of the modes ; the latter, who has been so widely imitated by composers with not a tittle of his craftsmanship, was blind to it all and mercilessly tortured musical airs to suit modern ideas of harmony. Brahms was a master of masters (so also was Beethoven, and a greater one after

all), but we must not allow the shadow of a great name to cover the falsities of a wrong method.

An English variant of Glinka or Grieg is still far to seek. It is not enough to go to our folk-songs for the insubstantial commodity known as "local colour." The great essentially English composer that should come will hdve grown up in the very atmosphere of the English folk-songs ; they will have had for him at all times and in all places the beauty of memorial; their loveliness and hopefulness will be a part of his being. Thus it would appear that the nation must have its national music by heart before we can look for his coming. But the knowledge of the recovered folk-songs has spread with such surprising swiftness in the last four or five years that, in the country at any rate, they are already an antidote to the abominations of the music-halls of the great towns. School-children learn them with such ease and so joyously that one must needs believe that the blood in their veins has been singing them inarticulately all the time ; that nothing more was necessary than to teach them the words their parents had forgotten. The old folk-singers, some of whom remember hundreds of these old yet ever-young modal tunes, are passing away. None of them seem to have been born much after 1840: the turning-point in time when the victory of Cobdenism, the expansion of manufacturing industries, the extension of our railway system, and the coming of free education were seen to be inevitable—when, in a word, the utilitarian Victorian Age, with its tendencies to uniformity, was dawning. The seventy-nine songs in Mr. Baring-Gould's "Folk-Songs from Somerset" were contributed by thirty-eight singers whose average age was well over seventy years; all of them to-day sleep in the village church-

yards of the West Country. A few years ago the last of the peripatetic bards of County Meath, a seed-plot of Irish minstrelsy, died in the workhouse; it will not be long before the last of the English folk-singers departs. But for every one of the singers of English folk-songs who have died in the last ten years there are a thousand children to keep alive his treasures of music and romance. A thousand to-day; there will be ten thousand to-morrow. Moreover, the traditional dances, with their traditional folk-melodies (hundreds of them have now been collected and choreographically recorded), the value of which has been wisely recognized by the Board of Education, are extending their conquests just as widely and rapidly. Great is beauty—English beauty—and *it* shall prevail, now that the petticoats and ruffs of artistic convention have been cast aside.